

**Summary Report of
TUCP President Democrito T. Mendoza
for the TUCP 6th National Convention
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1. Introduction

The report of the TUCP General Council for the 6th TUCP National Convention gives a detailed description of the work the TUCP has done in furthering its lead role, as the most representative labor organization in the country, in building unions and communities.

However, let me stress that the report can not fully capture the extensiveness, the painstaking efforts, and the dedication that the TUCP leadership, the Secretariat, the federation officers and staff, and TUCP's allies have put towards these achievements.

The period under review, 1996 to 2001, has been most challenging for TUCP, to say the least. The period can be best remembered as the time when globalization - and its forces liberalization, flexibilization, and deregulation - wrought havoc on conditions of work and life of workers and their families.

It was also in this period, May 30, 1997 to be exact, when Government at the prodding of employers, promulgate Department Order No. 10 which actually liberalized, rather than curbing, labor-only contracting. It bred many forms of anti-labor practices, including legal means of busting unions, and resulted in widespread exploitation of workers. Records will show that TUCP was alone when it objected to the signing of a proposed D.O. in May 1995; the other unions only chimed in later.

The period also marked a turning point in the country's history, both for the country's political leaders and the people. For us Filipinos, the year exposed the basic flaws in our democracy, particularly in our electoral system.

Let me present a brief picture of TUCP's activities in the last five years. I would like to stress several important development.

2. The economy...

Structural reforms implemented by Government and the leadership of former President Fidel V. Ramos improved the economy in the mid-90's. However, the gains were erased by the 1997-98 financial crises and the Administration of former President Joseph Estrada. These two factors taken together are estimated to have claimed over close to a million jobs.

Even the little growth in the economy did not translate to better terms for workers and their families. Unemployment remained high at 7.4% in 1996 to 11.4% in 1996 to 11.4% in 2001. In the third quarter of 2001, unemployment stood at its highest at 13%.

Despite these, the TUCP has secured some gains for workers and the movement. With its meager resources and efforts of its union leaders, it has moved many things.

3. On wages . . . and the empty calls of the left

TUCP's annual wage offensive has increased minimum wages by an average of 11.8%. Table 1 shows developments in minimum wages in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Year	TUCP Petition	Amount of Increase	Minimum Wage	% of Increase
1994	P125			
1995	35	P20	145	16%
1996	37.50	20	165	13%
1997	45	20	185	12%
1998	40	13	198	7%
1999	53	25.50	223.50	12%
2000	75.50	26.50	250.	11%
2001	77	30	280	12%

While wages in the country are far from the Constitutionally-mandated living wages, TUCP believes living wages can be achieved only over time, in several stages, and in carefully calibrated steps.

TUCP's achievements in raising the take home pay of workers contrast with the disruptive populist calls of leftist organizations. Recently, TUCP expressed its views on the Bayan Muna proposal in Congress to increase minimum wages by P125 in one blow. Despite its mass appeal, the proposal is unrealistic and not sensitive to current conditions. The economy, the industries, and companies are in difficulty; plant closures and retrenchments are reaching new heights. The world is falling into recession.

While courting workers to their cause, the Left downplay the disastrous effects on industries. TUCP stressed that unless the Left wants all investors to transfer to China, such proposal should be modified for the moment. Or do they?

4. The Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM), another attempt at labor unity.

Efforts to unify the labor movement took another substantial step with the formation of the Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM). Much of the spadework was done by TUCP and the leaders of the Labor Advisory Consultative Council (LACC).

LSM was born out of the necessity of a united labor front in face the challenges brought by globalization. Former President Estrada's apparent anti-labor actions also contributed to LSM's birth.

LSM is an informal coalition of like-minded and democratic trade unions, namely the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), the Trade Unions of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS), the Alliance of Filipino Workers (AFW), scores of independent workers associations, and transport groups.

Initially, the National Confederation of Labor (NCL) led by Felicisimo Carullo joined the LSM. It left the formation after majority of the LSM members openly called for the ouster of Estrada and NCL joined the reactionary Labor Reform Block.

Today, LSM continues to hold joint programs and closely coordinates its advocacy initiatives, including the successful campaign to repeal D.O. No. 10 and the joint petitions on minimum wages. We hope that LSM will serve as the vehicle to finally unify all democratic trade unions in the country and serve as the single and united voice of the Filipino workers.

LSM was founded on February 2, 2000 (2-2-2000). The TUCP President presently serves as Chairperson of LSM. Brother Ramon J. Jabar of FFW and Daniel Edralin of the APL serve as co-Vice Chairpersons.

5. Organizing in the EPZs

This period saw TUCP's successful campaign to organize workers in the country's export processing zones. The once little fiefdoms have started to fall to the determined organizing of TUCP's affiliates.

In 1996, the TUCP ended the no-union status of the Cavite export zone. We did the same in Victoria Wave in Caloocan and in Luisita Industrial Park, both in 1998. Subic fell to TUCP unions in 1999.

Since 1996, TUCP affiliates have organized 124 workplaces representing over 35, 000 workers, meeting TUCP's "Sandaan sa 2000" [100 unions in 2000] targets. TUCP unions have been certified as exclusive bargaining agents in 46 companies involving 12,712 workers, There are a score of pending petitions for Certification Elections inside the zones while another 25 unions are poised to file petitions for CE.

In the public sector, PGEA has organized 20 new unions representing 9,849 members.

The list is partial. Other affiliates have organized many unions outside the zones.

6. Coalitions

TUCP knows it cannot complete its work in workplaces, communities, and the nation by itself. The magnitude of the struggle is great. Even our joint work with other unions is, and will not be, enough.

We need to engage, and we have so engaged, in multisectoral work with many groups. Our coalition programs on the informal sector (access to resources, access to social protection, child labor); on disadvantaged women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, discrimination, abuse of migrant women labor); on judicial reforms, governance, and anti-corruption; and on reproductive health programs and policies have achieved many things, including highlighting the value of many organizations and individuals working together for common objectives, common issues, and common interests.

The good practices from these coalition work - and participating organizations themselves - are being applied in our anti-sweatshops campaign which verifies compliances with ILO core standards, corporate codes of conduct, industry agreements, and the OECD Guidelines on MNEs (multinational enterprises). The promotion of freedom of association and collective bargaining (the formation of new unions), the key to monitoring enforcement of core standards and labor laws, will be less difficult with local organizations and communities working with unions.

We will need coalition work also in pushing pending electoral reforms we have started, including modernization of elections, absentee voting for OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers), and sectoral representation in Congress and in local governments, as well as labor and workplace policy reforms.

7. Party-list disappointments

The 1998 and 2001 party-list elections are painful memories for TUCP and its affiliates. In 1998, four parties identified with the TUCP, namely the ATUCP, ALU, NACUSIP, and AWATU, took part in the first-ever party-list elections. All failed, mainly due to lack of voters education and lack of resources. In the succeeding elections of 2001, TUCP re-grouped, with ALU, ATUCP, and NACUSIP uniting under the banner of ATUCP; AWATU insisted on going its own way. Again we failed to get the required 2% of all votes for the party-list.

TUCP was among the strongest advocates for the institutionalization of sectoral empowerment through party-list elections. TUCP was there from inception to implementation of the party-list law. However, we failed to capitalize on our strength and the goodwill we have earned through the years.

The flaws in the party-list law which allowed the participation of moneyed and non-marginalized groups and the mis-actions of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) are good reasons. But we have only ourselves to blame. We all share the responsibility for and agony of our failure. We failed to appreciate our common interest, and failed to mobilize all our members for the party-list cause.

We must learn our lessons from these. There can be only one TUCP. Those who insist otherwise have no place in the organization. We need to enforce more discipline in the the organization.

8. Workers Education Initiatives

In educating our members, we have made available the best programs and materials our resources permit. They range from the basic to the novel, from those for ordinary union members to those for federation and local leaders and for labor representatives in tripartite agencies.

We have trained shop stewards, local officers, education officers, peer educators, researchers , organizers, even federation staff.

We have conducted or supported courses on basic trade unionism, basic and advanced leadership, trainers training.

A series of programs are being implemented to integrate gender into trade union work and to address wider women's issues in the community.

Programs and forums have been held to deal with labor laws, conflict resolution, occupational safety and health, social safety nets.

We also have held courses on non-traditional trade union issues such as the informal sector, child labor, migrant workers, reproductive health, HIV-AIDS, the environment, sustainable development, economic literacy (economics for trade unionism).

A workers agenda for the 21st century, socio-economic policies and the international financial institutions (IFIs), wages and productivity, globalization, competitiveness are issues tackled in med-level programs.

A series of information technology courses are being implemented to bring union operations in step with 21st century demands.

We are experimenting applying distance learning to promoting fundamental principles and rights at work and ILO core standards.

These programs have been implemented in partnership with various fraternal organizations. I take this opportunity to thank them: the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Solidarity Center) who has been our good partner for decades, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its Asian and Pacific Regional Organization (APRO), and the Japan International Labor Foundation (JILAF).

TUCP also thanks the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the coalition projects, the International Labor Organization (ILO) for various workers programs, the United Nation Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) for family welfare, and the David & Lucille Packard Foundation for reproductive health.

Our appreciation also goes to national centers Japan Trade Union Confederation (JTUC-RENGO), the Danish unions LO-FTF for workers education, and the Dutch union FNV for child labor, among other organizations.

9. Political Activism, the Anti-Erap Campaign

Early in his Administration, former President Estrada already exhibited his bias against labor unions. In the 1999 Labor Day celebration in Malacañang, the former President commented that labor unions are only after workers money. Months into office, Cabinet members called for the abrogation of minimum wages and a prohibition on strikes. A Constitutional Commission to review the Philippine Constitution and a Task Force on Labor bristled with employers and pointedly excluded labor representatives.

He replaced labor representatives in the Social Security System, Pag-IBIG, Cebu Ports Authority with his people.

In October 14, 2000, the TUCP with 12 other groups signed the impeachment complaint filed against President Joseph Estrada. The complaint alleged bribery (accepting bribe money from jueteng and tobacco excise taxes), graft and corrupt practices, betrayal of public trust, and violation of the Constitution, including unexplained wealth, direct participation in real estate transactions involving a firm he owns.

Weeks later, TUCP members took to the streets to push for his ouster. In Mendiola, at the Liwasang Bonifacio, in EDSA, at the Senate grounds, TUCP members took part in the multisectoral protests. In the midst of these, the TUCP building was hit by fire; its Laguna and Cavite extension offices were burgled three times

In January 16, 2001, at the sorry climax of the impeachment trial, TUCP members with other groups trooped to the EDSA shrine in the middle of the night to express outrage over attempts of 11 senators identified with Estrada to derail the impeachment trial.

Four days later, Estrada left Malacañang, and the rest is history. Let the readers make no mistake about it, TUCP and other unions and groups suffered for Estrada's actions. In the end, he paid for it.

10. Future Directions

The future portends many more challenges. In the last Convention, we said that TUCP and trade unions must re-invent themselves. We have started; we have to do more. We must continue the process, and continue with unparalleled conviction.

For the TUCP, the true representative of Filipino working people, the work cut out for us is both hard and complex.

TUCP has to accelerate its non-traditional work with trade unions and other groups. It must provide new services to members, and organize and service new members, the better to aggressively promote core standards and protect workers rights everywhere. It should re-structure itself to be more responsive to the needs of members and the movement in general.

The unions must attract the young, especially women workers. They should go beyond the notion that trade unions concern themselves only with shop floor issues. Trade unionism should be about decent work (in the private sector and public agencies, and in the formal and informal sectors), better lives, healthy lifestyles, and eventually rewarding retirement for workers and their families.

Trade unions should build a social movement, from the enterprises to the communities. Their actions and programs should, not only preserve jobs, but help create new jobs, assists in training and retraining workers, in matching skills with demand, and in mainstreaming productive activities into the domestic and export markets.

The TUCP must craft new organizing strategies. Organizing in the 21st century is, and will be, different. Workers of century 21, in ICT (information, communication technology), brain-based skills, those working overseas, require new things and demand new services. Workers in atypical work - in the informal sector, part-time, working from home - have to be organized atypically.

Our organizers have to be many things for many workers. They have to be coordinators - of many programs and activities - in addition to being educators. In century 21, organizers will need to balance organizing, education, advocacy, and monitoring entrepreneurial work, among many activities.

We should push for mechanisms and procedures that will inspire individual workers, to qualify and want to be union members. Especially in the new service and trade enterprises, and in small enterprises, the organizing approaches and strategies of old will not work.

TUCP is investing in technology, communications, and media linkages. It has to do more, and fast.

Looking inward, TUCP must hasten the entry of new and young leaders, especially women. It must ensure a continuous line of leadership. It must develop leaders who are not only dedicated but are able to respond quickly to fast developments.

The key to the hearts and minds of workers of century 21 is: who inspires a stronger sense of belonging, who responds to workers needs and wants, who delivers more services, who delivers better services.

Adventurism, populist calls, political propaganda, have seen their days. The workers of century 21 will demand better service, new services. Organizing will be about performance in areas we have not touched or even thought of before.

We have to do better, much much better. We have learned our lessons - from our own experiences and from the experiences of others elsewhere. We have had our victories. Big and small victories, far greater than our disappointments. We will use these successes to build our unions and communities into the next five years and beyond.

Let us begin another chapter in trade unionism today.