

FILIPINO WORKERS' MANIFESTO

May 1, 2003

Workers have many problems. Inadequate wages. Difficulties at work. Unrestrained increase in prices of petroleum products and commodities. Fewer jobs. Worldwide economic slowdown, etc.

The war in Iraq. SARS. Some sectors attempting to destabilize the country. Political squabbles. One gets the impression that problems of workers and the nation are insoluble.

Employers with their foolish proposals. Strike moratorium for 10 years, reduction in wages, contractualization – all exploitative ... and incendiary

Workers and OFWs (overseas Filipino workers), who have been called "new heroes" – all clamor for respect and justice.

Today, Labor Day 2003, marks the end of the centennial of the Philippine labor movement. What have we achieved? Where is respect and justice?

Employers and government should be more rational. They should listen to workers who have been partners in building this nation.

Many issues and problems are complicated and cannot be solved quickly and by resort to adversarial approaches.

Our tripartite partners can rely on our cooperation if they heed our demands:

1. Forceful implementation of labor laws, especially the fundamental ILO core standards. Also payment of minimum wages, ending arbitrary layoffs, curbing non-remittance of SSS (social security), Philhealth (medicare) and Pag-IBIG (housing) premiums, repeal of GSIS Memorandum Circular No. 1-002.
2. Faster resolution of labor cases and further liberalization of requirements for organizing unions.
3. Protection of local industries enterprises against dumping, smuggling, and other forms of unfair trade competition, and serious review of the country's trade commitments, including WTO and AFTA.
4. Ensuring protection of OFWs, particularly migrant health workers, and workers being sent to Iraq and other areas in conflict.
5. Additional medical and health benefits and appropriate action against SARS, HIV-AIDS and work-related diseases.
6. Exemption from withholding tax of workers earning only P20,000 a month or less.
7. Reduction of prices of petroleum products and electricity, and review of the unjust PPA (purchased power adjustment).
8. Meaningful consultations on reforms in policies and laws. Appointment of genuine workers' representatives in tripartite agencies.
9. Low-cost housing for workers and lower interest on loans.

10. Promotion and strengthening of workers enterprises and participation of workers cooperatives in privatization of government assets and government financial institutions.
11. Pushing responsible and issue-based politics, and not those based on personalities, wealth, or influence. Pushing professionalism, efficiency, accountability, and transparency in government service.
12. Enactment of long-pending legislation on anti-trafficking of women and children and against domestic violence and sexual harassment, and broader opportunities for livelihood and social protection for women.

100 years have passed since the Philippine labor movement started its quest for equity and collective empowerment of workers.

This year, and in the next 100 Labor Days, the movement will continue to lead in societal reforms through promotion of understanding and dialogue, towards a truly independent, just and humane future for the country's workers.

Long live Filipino workers!
Long live the Philippines.

Labor Solidarity Movement (LSM)
Alliance of Free Workers (AFW)
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)
Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP)