



ANG

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Editorial

Raise wages!

It is correct to call for an increase in workers' wages and government employees' salaries. It is a demand that has become ever more urgent in the face of the intensifying oppression and hardships imposed by the US-Arroyo regime. It is a call that begs no further elaboration especially among workers who struggle on a daily basis to support their families amid extreme poverty. On the first of May, it is but fitting for this demand to reverberate nationwide along with the cry to oust the reactionary regime.

However way the government tries to doctor the statistics, it cannot deny the burning need for a wage increase. Long before the regime admitted that the inflation rate in March doubled compared to last year's, the people have already been

suffering from the spiraling cost of basic goods and services. And no matter how much the regime's most rabid minions alter the definition of unemployment, they cannot hide the burgeoning ranks of the jobless, which include those newly graduated from college.

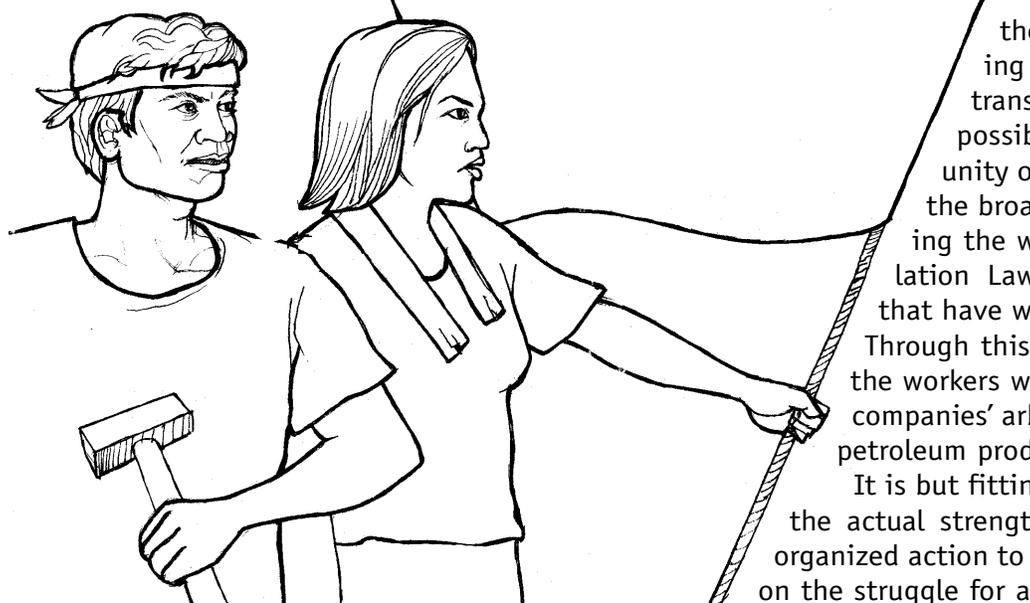
Only a ₱125 hike in the current ₱250 minimum daily wage can provide immediate relief to millions of worker families. Before the advent of new taxes and the weekly oil price hikes, a family of six already needed over ₱500 a day to live decently.

The regime openly mocks the workers' struggle not only by its continued rejection of a wage increase but by allowing incessant increases in the prices of basic goods and services. The workers are raging in anger at the Arroyo regime for insisting on the approval of additional taxes before a wage hike could even be considered. The reactionary government and the monopoly corporations can't even wait to seize anew

money that the workers haven't even laid their hands on yet!

The regime also claims that the only sufficient basis for raising wages is an increase in public transportation fares. It dangles a possible fare hike to destroy the unity of the transportation sector with the broad masses of the people, including the workers, against the Oil Deregulation Law and other laws and policies that have wrought suffering on the people. Through this, the Arroyo regime hopes that the workers would turn a blind eye to the oil companies' arbitrary increases in the prices of petroleum products.

It is but fitting to demonstrate to the regime the actual strength of the workers and people's organized action to put a stop to the scorn it heaps on the struggle for a wage increase.



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National transport stoppage, a success

A nationwide transport stoppage was successfully launched on April 18 in various cities and towns to demand the junking of the Oil Deregulation Law and a stop to incessant hikes in the prices of petroleum products. The strike was part of a series of actions launched in preparation for this year's Labor Day commemoration. Workers in both industry and the service sector gave the strike their all-out support.

The transport strike was launched by the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (PISTON), the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines (FEJODAP), the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-

Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (PCDO-ACTO), the Alliance of Transport Operators and Drivers Associations of the Philippines (ALTODAP) and the Integrated Metro Bus Operators Associations (IMBOA).

Initial reports showed that

transportation was 85-90% paralyzed in Metro Manila, particularly in Quezon City, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Pasay, Marikina, Taguig, Pasig and San Juan.

In Bulacan, transportation in Malolos was 100% paralyzed, with 90% paralysis in Guiguinto, Balagtas and Meycauayan.

In Southern Tagalog, 75% of transportation routes in Biñan, Sta. Rosa, San Pedro, San Pablo and Los Baños was paralyzed.

In Bicol, 98% of public vehicles in Sorsogon and Camarines Sur and 90% in Albay did not ply their routes.

In Cagayan de Oro, up to 98% of transportation, especially the *habal-habal* (motorcycles), was paralyzed by the strike led by the Solidarity Transport Alliance and the Transport Federation.

In Davao City and adjacent provinces, government offices closed when the Transport in Southern Mindanao for Solidarity, Independence and Nationalism (TRANSMISSION-PISTON) paralyzed 98% of transportation.

Meanwhile, oil companies had the gall to ignore the people's widespread clamor to stop the weekly hikes in the prices of petroleum products. They raised gasoline, diesel, kerosene and LPG prices by seventy-five centavos right on the day of the nationwide transport strike. They have likewise announced that their weekly hikes will continue until they recover almost ₱3 per liter in the price of diesel and over ₱3 per liter in the price of gasoline. PISTON, meanwhile, warned that it would continue its protest actions until oil prices are rolled back and the Oil Deregulation Law is junked.

In related news, members of the Kilusang Mayo Uno and its



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allied organizations from Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog camped out in front of Congress from April 11 to 13. They demanded that members of congress pass the proposed ₱125 increase in the workers' daily wage. The KMU said that it was only right to pass House Bill 345 whose approval has been blocked in Congress for several years now.

At the same time, the KMU condemned the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) for continuing to ignore the workers' just demands. Instead, ECOP is proposing a review of the Labor Code to legalize labor contractualization and flexibilization and strongly opposes any proposal to raise wages and ensure workers' rights. AB

US-Arroyo regime reaps more enemies

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been propagating the document "Knowing the Enemy" among all military units as part of the campaign to suppress organizations upholding the people's interests.

Just as Marcos did in the past, the US-Arroyo regime has been red-baiting various organizations, accusing them of being fronts or partners of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and New People's Army (NPA) to justify its use of violence against them, in accordance with the doctrine of a "war against terrorism." This is part of Gloria Arroyo and US imperialism's grand plan to impose martial law nationwide, with the AFP's special forces as well as Angelo Reyes, the CIA's main liaison to the reactionary regime serving as point men.

"Knowing the Enemy" particularly targets organizations that actively expose and oppose the Arroyo regime's corruption, puppetry and repression. The document alleges that the CPP controls BAYAN, Bayan Muna, Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), COURAGE, GABRIELA, Anakbayan and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), among others.

In the face of widespread criticism, the AFP top brass has come up with all sorts of excuses. It presented the media with a doctored version of the document on April 8 that omits the names of certain organizations and lists progressive groups as being "influenced" instead of "controlled" by the CPP.

Nevertheless, no amount of the regime and the AFP high officialdom's sophistry could conceal the fact that the entire AFP continues to view those organizations as "enemies of the state."

In fact, AFP officials at the regional and provincial levels have

had no qualms about carrying out their campaign against members of these organizations. In Negros, the military has unfurled streamers linking the names of mass organizations with the CPP and NPA. In Eastern Visayas today, where the most recent cases of extrajudicial killings have taken place, the AFP has been propagating slogans saying that Bayan Muna members are allied with the NPA. AB





Relentless violence against progressive forces

There has been no letup in the violence inflicted on leaders, activists and supporters of democratic mass organizations. A union leader and a Bayan Muna (BM) supporter were killed while another Bayan Muna officer survived an assassination attempt in the Visayas in the second week of April. Two of the victims were from Eastern Visayas and were targeted by elements of the 8th ID under Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan.

Bayan Muna supporter Alfredo Davis, 45, was killed on April 15 in Barangay San Vicente, Mahaplag, Leyte. Davis was riding a multicab with his wife Imelda when he was shot by two motorcycle-riding gunmen. Davis' wife was wounded in the attack.

Prior to this, gunmen pumped 22 bullets into Edwin Bargamento, 46, National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW) auditor and member of the NFSW Regional Executive Committee. Bargamento was shot and killed in Barangay Tortosa, Manapla, Negros Occidental on

April 13 by suspected elements of the RPA-ABB. He had just come from a meeting in Bacolod City with his comrades in the NFSW and had joined a picket to demand a P125 increase in the minimum daily wage.

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna-Eastern Samar provincial coordinator Alden "Boy" Ambida was seriously wounded after being shot on April 9 in Borongan, Eastern Samar by two men aboard a motorcycle.

Up to 70 officials and members of progressive organizations have been killed while 14 have been



missing since 2001. Thirty-seven of them were killed this year alone.

Among those killed were Aileen Caparro, wife of Fr. Allan Caparro of the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR)-Eastern Visayas who was shot in Abuyog, Leyte on February 27; and Carlos Barsolaso, 38 and Charlie Gabriel, 24, who were with Fr. William Tadena when he was shot in La Paz, Tarlac on March 13. AB

Hundreds of residents evacuate in Samar

Hundreds of residents of five barangays of San Jorge, Samar have been forced to evacuate their homes since elements of the 34th IB intensified their abuses in March. The evacuees are from the villages of Sinit-an, Guadalupe, Hernandez, Bay-ang and Bungliw with a total population of 776. According to the residents, military violence against the barriofolk worsened after Red fighters of the NPA Arnulfo Ortiz Command staged a successful ambush on 34th IB troops.

A farmer couple living near the ambush site was killed after the military burned down their home a few days after the encounter. They were accused of involvement in the ambush.

Meanwhile, on March 9, suspected military men killed Sinit-an barangay captain Benito "Bening" Mabini. He had just replaced the former village chair Rolando Mabini, who had also been killed earlier.

Since then, villagers have been streaming out of their barangays. A fact-finding mission launched on April 7 by the San Jorge municipal council and other town officials revealed that the military has already been occupying the houses of a number of families that evacuated from Barangay Sinit-an. In Barangay Bungliw, the 34th IB threatened the residents that their barrio would be burned down if

they did not disclose the whereabouts of the NPA and that ten residents would be summarily executed for every soldier killed. In Barangays Guadalupe and Hernandez, barriofolk complained about the 34th IB's military abuses such as the soldiers' failure to pay for store purchases and return household items borrowed from the villagers. The troops also order women to climb coconut trees and forbid the barriofolk from spending the night in their distant farms. The barriofolk are also forced to attend meetings called by the military even when they are busy and are accused of being NPA members when they refuse. AB



6 firearms seized, 6 soldiers killed in Samar ambush

Red fighters of the NPA Arnulfo Ortiz Command seized an M60, an M203, two M14s and two M16s when they wiped out a six-man team of the 62nd IB in an ambush along the boundary of Barangays Canilungan and Hindang in Calbiga, Samar on April 8. The soldiers were on their way back to their camp after attending a barrio fiesta in the middle of their military operation. Among those killed was Lt. Williamson Tan, the leader of the team.

The 62nd IB had been in Samar province for only two weeks when the ambush occurred. It had a long record of abuses against the people during its stint in Eastern Samar. In February 2004, angry villagers of Barangay Tagaslian, Maydulong, Eastern Samar drove out an abusive unit of the 62nd IB that had based itself in the barrio for four months. The soldiers had threatened the villagers, picked fights and

indiscriminately fired their weapons. Their frequent drinking and gambling sprees also disrupted peace and order in the barrio.

Meanwhile, the military has responded to the April 8 ambush with ferocious attacks on the people. Two peasants were killed by the enemy in retaliation for the ambush. The military likewise burned down a house and illegally detained and harassed three peasants. Thirty to sixty percent (30-60%) of the residents of two barrios of Calbiga have been forced to evacuate because of the military's violent attacks.

In a statement, the National Democratic Front in Eastern Visayas said that unlike the NPA which only attacks legitimate targets in its tactical offensives, the reactionary military starkly violates human rights and international humanitarian law by deliberately and repeatedly attacking civilians and their communities.

AB

NPA reaps more victories in Mindanao

The New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao reaped more victories in 2004 as it advanced protracted people's war. In a statement on the NPA's 36th anniversary, the Mindanao Commission of the Communist Party of the Philippines said that the NPA in the island was able to launch 116 military actions and confiscated many high-powered firearms in 2004 compared to 93 military actions in 2003. Defensive actions have also been significantly reduced, said the Commission. However, even during defensive actions, Red commanders and fighters demonstrated a high level of courage and military capability, and in many instances, seized the initiative from military troops.

NPA membership in Mindanao still runs in the thousands, and includes the hundreds recruited last year. The guerrillas are organized in platoon and squad formations, according to the Commission.

The NPA was able to maintain its 38 guerrilla fronts covering 19 provinces, over 200 towns and cities and over 2,000 barrios island-wide. Established in these guerrilla fronts are the various mass organizations of peasants, women, youth, lumad and Moros.

The revolutionary mass base in Mindanao runs to over 500,000, bigger than in 2003. Thousands of people have benefited from antifeudal struggles as well as from services rendered by NPA guerrilla units such as free medical care and literacy programs.

On the other hand, the NPA has maintained its friendly relations with numerous elements of the CAFGU, AFP and PNP who sympathize with the revolutionary cause and secretly provide support to the revolutionary movement.

AB



Bello, Arroyo apologist

Since March, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) has condemned the series of assassinations and terrorist attacks perpetrated by the US-Arroyo regime against activists and leaders of mass organizations which are among the political forces most assiduously opposed to the regime's corruption, oppressive economic policies and puppetry to the US government.

The CPP has subsequently explained how Walden Bello's smear campaign against the CPP and progressive propeople organizations has dovetailed and served the regime's intensified fascist campaign since the first quarter of 2005.

Both Bello's statements in December 2004 and the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) briefing paper entitled "Knowing the Enemy" that pinpoint organizations like Bayan Muna (BM), the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) have the same objective. They both link these organizations to the revolutionary armed movement to justify their being targets of fascist attacks and the use of armed force against their leaders and members.

Fearing further isolation due to their attacks on the legal democratic movement, Bello and Akbayan issued an extremely belated statement on the series of political assassinations.

In issuing the statement, however, they have only succeeded in further exposing themselves as apologists of the Arroyo regime and its fascist attacks against activists and leaders of propeople organizations.

Bello and the Akbayan cannot deny that military and paramilitary forces of the Arroyo regime are behind the killings. In the face of all this, however, Bello and Akbayan could only come up with a mild rebuke of the Arroyo regime for its

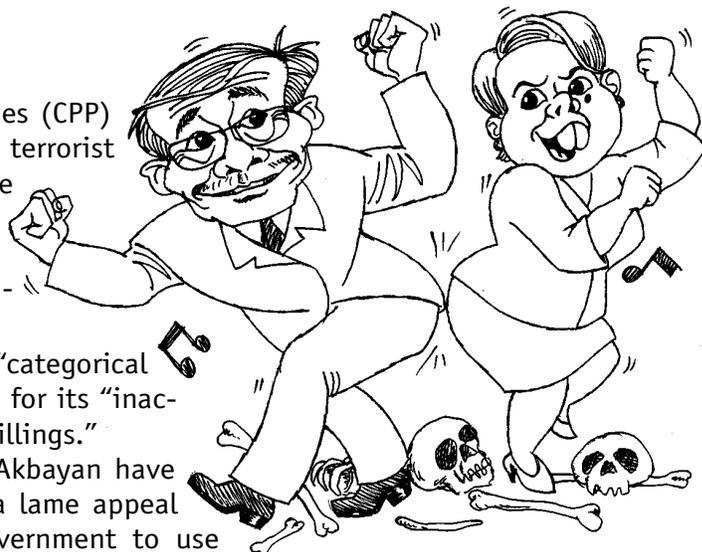
failure to issue a "categorical denunciation" and for its "inaction to stop the killings."

All Bello and Akbayan have done is to issue a lame appeal to the Arroyo government to use its "human rights mandates, vast resources and intelligence network" to solve the murder cases.

They muddle the issue and obscure the fact that it is the Arroyo regime that is behind the brutal and systematic campaign of suppression against propeople organizations.

Bello and Akbayan have merely made a feeble admonition to the Arroyo regime that it would be held "accountable for gross human rights violations" if it chooses to "ignore the killings." They cover up the fact that it is the Arroyo regime and its armed minions that have endorsed and actually perpetrated the series of killings of activists whom they regard as "enemies of the state" and "targets of the anti-terrorist war." Bello and Akbayan have no other objective but to confuse the people and to assuage the people's seething anger at the Arroyo regime's fascist attacks on a people waging resistance.

Bello and Akbayan's recent statements, which redound to a defense of the Arroyo regime, provide further elucidation on the real objectives of the attacks against the CPP and progressive organizations that have escalated since December. Since then, Bello and the Akbayan together with an



international network of Trotskyites and imperialist-funded NGOs have led an international campaign to demonize the CPP as "fascist" and have demanded that the propeople progressive organizations they have labeled as "CPP fronts" denounce the CPP and the New People's Army (NPA).

Bello and his associates are laboring under the mistaken belief that by undertaking this international psywar campaign, they could preempt the aboveground mass-based progressive forces from denouncing the terrorist attacks of the AFP, PNP and other armed minions of the Arroyo government.

Significantly, despite their pretensions to being "Left", Bello and Akbayan are not included in the AFP's list of "enemies of the state" in its "Knowing the Enemy" briefing paper (which Bello and Akbayan are also conspicuously silent about). They obviously pose no threat to the powers that be and have proven to be "good citizens" of the oppressive and exploitative system. Their insidious attempt to eliminate both the revolutionary and progressive forces in one fell swoop exposes them as nothing but reformist lap dogs of the reactionary ruling system. **AB**

Who is Pedro Tejino?

For over a year now, Pedro Tejino and a number of his cohorts have been taking refuge at the offices of Akbayan and Peace Foundation Inc. in Metro Manila. Akbayan has also been spreading the word that these people are peasant leaders of theirs who are being hunted by the New People's Army.

Who is Pedro Tejino? Is he really a peasant leader as Akbayan has been claiming?

The truth is that Pedro Tejino is an armed element and leader of a paramilitary group in San Narciso, Quezon. The paramilitary group in question operates under the auspices of the 74th IB based in Catanauan, Quezon. It passes itself off as a "peasant association" affiliated with the Akbayan-Peace Foundation Inc. and is involved in landgrabbing and other criminal and antisocial activities such as carabao-rustling.

It is Pedro Tejino's armed group that was behind the April 2004 murder of Pedro's own brother Paulo Tejino. Pedro's group had earlier expelled Paulo

because of his firm opposition to the "association's" activities.

Tejino's armed group has been unleashing violence against peasants struggling for genuine land reform in Far South Quezon. It comprises one component in the 74th IB and the 416th PNP Mobile Group's fascist campaign to destroy peasant mass organizations.

Pedro Tejino's group has been threatening peasants struggling for genuine land reform and forcing them to join a group allied with the reformist Akbayan-Peace Foundation Inc. which supports the reactionary government's sham Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

The peasant masses are deeply angered at Pedro Tejino. The fact that Akbayan claims Pedro Tejino as one of its leaders only further exposes its antipeasant and antipeople activities. It also bares Akbayan's collusion with paramilitary armed groups that serve as the AFP's partners in the counterrevolutionary war.

US-Arroyo regime

The Philippines' biggest pimp

The US-Arroyo regime is the biggest reason behind the intensification of prostitution in the Philippines. Its policies which have wrought extreme poverty drive growing numbers of women, children and even men into prostitution.

The pervasiveness of prostitution caught the public's eye anew when the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) revealed the shocking statistic that prostitution has emerged as the fourth largest source of income in the Philippines. GABRIELA has reported that there were 300,000 prostitutes in the Philippines in 1997. The number excludes part-time prostitutes, entertainers overseas and victims of sex trafficking. In 1998, the number grew to 400,000, equivalent then to the number of workers in the manufacturing sector. At that rate of increase, it would not be farfetched to say that there may be a million or more prostitutes in the country today.

But poverty alone, no matter how extreme, is not enough to propel prostitution to what it has

become today in the Philippines—so pervasive, so organized and extremely profitable for syndicates.

Historically, it was severe poverty in close collusion with the US military bases' long stay in the Philippines and the government's aggressive promotion of

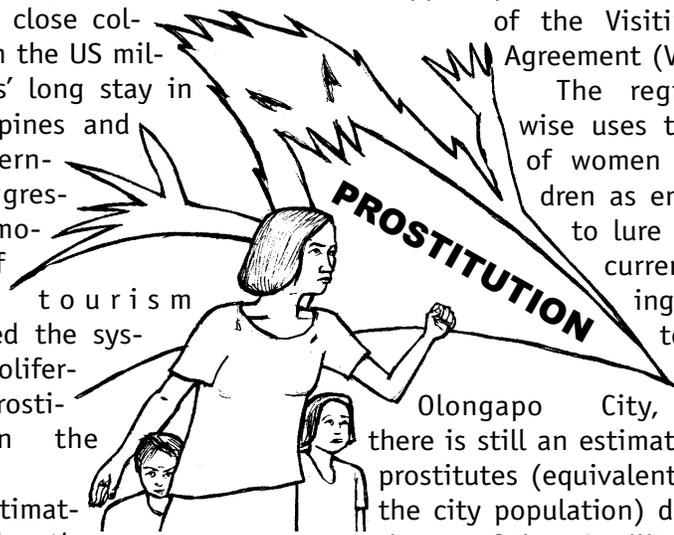
tourism that caused the systematic proliferation of prostitution in the country.

It is estimated that by the mid-1980's, prostitution around the US' two large military bases in the country had already brought in

up to \$500 million. The hundreds of millions of dollars that the government expects to earn from the further growth of prostitution is definitely one of the reasons why the Arroyo regime has been seeking a permanent American military presence and the escalation of US military intervention in the country. Up to 10,000 American soldiers now regularly enter through 22 Philippine ports with the approval of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

The regime likewise uses the bodies of women and children as enticements to lure in foreign currency earnings from sex tourism.

In Olongapo City, there is still an estimated 15,000 prostitutes (equivalent to 8% of the city population) despite the closure of the US military base in Subic. Aside from catering to American soldiers aboard warships that dock occasionally in Subic, they



serve a regular clientele which includes British, Irish, Australian, Japanese, Korean and other tourists.

It is also the Arroyo regime's official policy to urge women to go overseas as entertainers in Japan in exchange for hundreds of millions of dollars in remittances. There are at present up to 180,000 women entertainers in Japan who remit up to \$200 million annually to the Philippines. Many of them fall victim to prostitution and other sexual abuses in the hands of the Yakuza criminal syndicate.

Meanwhile, there are as yet no estimates of the number of victims of cybersex—or pornography and prostitution on the internet. Through the internet and digital cameras, women and children are shown having sex or performing other lascivious acts for their clients to watch. Modern technology such as cellphones has now made it much easier to create and propagate pornography and more difficult to apprehend the perpetrators. **AB**

Prostituted children

One in every four prostitutes in the Philippines is a child. Estimates put the number of child prostitutes in the Philippines today from 100,000 up to over 200,000. In fact, since 1998, the Philippines has already ranked fourth among nine countries worldwide with the most number of prostituted children. In Asia, the Philippines is third only to India and Thailand in the number of child prostitutes.

Areas in the country with the heaviest concentration of prostituted children are Metro Manila, Angeles City, Puerto Galera in Mindoro, and the cities of Davao and Cebu. It is said that up to 75% of prostitutes in Angeles City's red light district are children.

A Unicef study in 1984 revealed that child prostitution syndicates operated in seven provinces in the Philippines. In 1997, the number grew to 37 provinces. Their area of coverage has definitely expanded since then.

The number of adult women prostitutes declined as a result of the US military bases' ouster in 1991, but child prostitution has since escalated. One factor in its proliferation is the decadent social view that regards children as creatures devoid of any rights. Another factor is the fear among many clients of the spread of HIV/AIDS, hence the search for young virgins.

Fr. Shay Cullen, an Irish priest who has been managing a project that attends to the welfare of child prostitutes, regards child prostitution as the ultimate in exploitation. "People of other nations have exploited the raw materials of poorer countries for centuries," he said. "Now, they exploit the bodies of our children." **AB**

The government's bogus and inutile land reform program

The bogus nature of the reactionary state's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) is increasingly coming to light. After 17 years, peasants are as landless and as poor as ever, including the supposed beneficiaries of the government's land reform program.

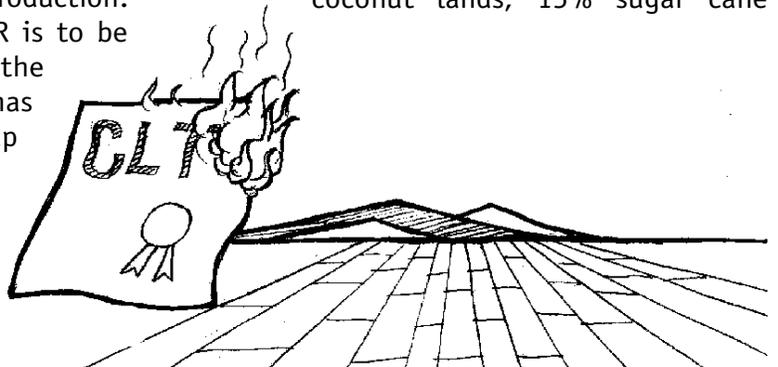
No less than a study by the Department of Land Reform (DLR) in April reveals that the CARP is sham, inutile and going nowhere in its avowed goal of liberating the peasantry from poverty and feudal exploitation.

The DLR's statistics indicate that the earnings of peasants in CARP lands continue to decline. From 1990 to 2000, the incomes of peasants under CARP fell by 8.9%. DLR estimates place their

earnings at P66,000 annually, with only half sourced from agricultural production.

If the DLR is to be believed, the government has distributed up to 3.5 million hectares, or 82% of the targeted 4.3 million hectares

since CARP's implementation. In fact, however, as peasants have repeatedly stressed, most of the lands that were allegedly distributed were public lands that they have long been tilling and developing. The truth is that only 1.5 million hectares—which comprises only a small proportion of private lands—has been subjected to CARP. Eighty percent of these are coconut lands, 15% sugar cane



fields and 5% commercial farms.

Landlords have retained control over thousands of hectares of land where the peasant masses suffer cruel exploitation and poverty. Landlords have been able to use various provisions of the land reform law to perpetuate control over their feudal property.

One such provision is the "stock distribution option" (SDO) scheme where landlords distribute corporate shares of stock instead of land. It is one of the main policies that the Cojuangco family has exploited to retain control over its large landholdings in Hacienda Luisita, and one which farm workers at the hacienda have been fighting. They have called for its abrogation and have demanded that the land be distributed directly to the peasants. Their intense struggle has compelled the DLR to review 13 other cases of SDO.

Worse, most of the lands that were supposed to have been distributed have since reverted or are in the process of being reverted to the landlords through the cancellation of certificates of land ownership award (CLOA), emancipation patents (EP) and certificates of land transfer (or CLTs, from Marcos' agrarian reform program) issued to beneficiaries because of their failure to keep up with the monthly payments. In 2000, according to incomplete data from the DLR, 1,892 EPs and CLOAs covering 375,000 hectares of land had already been cancelled. However, another study states that as early as 1999, there were 32,598 EPs and CLOAs already cancelled. The actual number is no doubt bigger. **AB**



The US filed a complaint with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in March, calling for an investigation of alleged human rights violations in Cuba and demanding that UN officials be allowed to visit Cuban prisons.

Cuba has strongly denounced the US move. The US, Cuba said, has no right to file such a complaint in the light of its horrendous record in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Guantanamo, Cuba and all corners of the globe. According to Cuba, it is the US that must be investigated in the first place because it has indefinitely detained suspects and subjected them to torture and other forms of maltreatment in its own prisons in Camp X-ray in Guantanamo. For many years, the US has also imposed an embargo on Cuba, prevented Cubans living in the US to remit monies to their relatives or even allow them to visit. It has also imposed many restrictions on Americans wishing to visit Cuba to take advantage of inexpensive medicines and treatments or simply to become tourists. The US has likewise been bullying its allies into supporting the resolution in the UN in exchange for aid.

In related news, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) assailed the US for its use of the UN to sow intrigue and maneuver against Cuba. In a state-

ment, the NDFP said that US imperialism alternately uses and abuses the United Nations and its agencies for its narrow interests. It manipulates the UN whenever it suits its purpose. It disregards and heaps abuse on the UN whenever it is not in accord with the US.

It is the height of hypocrisy for the US to pass judgment on the human rights record of other countries, said the NDFP. US imperialism is the Number One plunderer, aggressor and terrorist and the worst human rights violator.

Its wars of aggression and occupation of Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and Iraq have killed and maimed hundreds of thousands, destroyed cities and ruined the economies of these countries. Its record of installing and backing dictators like Marcos, Pinochet, Park Chung-hee, Mobutu and a whole line of military dictators is unmatched by any other imperialist power. The international community has justly condemned the US' flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, said the NDFP. **AB**

US sabotaging GRP-MILF peace talks

THE US reaped criticism when it openly intervened and tried to sabotage the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) through a series of anti-MILF statements made by various US officials.

US embassy charge d'affaires Joseph Mussomeli first warned on March 11 that Mindanao was on its way to becoming the next Afghanistan because of reports that terrorists have been training in the island. Mussomeli issued the statement a week before scheduled talks between the GRP and the MILF in Malaysia. Then, on March 29, US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said that the US State Department had plans to include the MILF in its terrorist listing

because of its alleged links with Jemaah Islamiyah. Adm. William Fallon, who heads the US Pacific Command, added fuel to the fire when he asserted that the two organizations did have ties to each other.

Because of such outright intervention, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) called on the MILF to be vigilant against US attempts to meddle and force the collapse of the MILF-GRP peace negotiations. In a statement, CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal charged that the US was employing "political blackmail" when it insinuated that it would include the MILF in its terrorist listing. Ka Roger said it was an attempt by the US to force the MILF to surrender to the GRP or else risk being labeled "terrorist" and end the negotiations.

UN and Harvard hail Cuba's HIV/AIDS program

CUBA has an outstanding record in health care. It is a leader in research on the eradication of diseases, and in providing inexpensive, if not free, medical treatment. Among its notable achievements is the eradication of polio (the last recorded case was in 1962, according to the World Health Organization). It has also formulated a drug to treat cancers in the head and neck, created an inexpensive synthetic vaccine against meningitis B which is the cause of death of many children worldwide and developed vaccines against haemophilus influenza type B which causes meningitis, as well as against many other infections.

There is likewise a low incidence of tuberculosis and cholera in Cuba. The country also sends health professionals like doctors and nurses to allied countries to provide free training and services. Cuba likewise exports inexpensive medicines, benefiting over 40 countries including Mexico, China, Iran and India. Its most recent breakthrough in medicine for which it has earned acclaim is controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In an international conference of medical

researchers on HIV/AIDS on March 28-29 sponsored by the Harvard University School of Medicine, the Caribbean Community Alliance Against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP), the Cuban Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine (IPK) and the Rockefeller Foundation, participants lauded Cuba's successes in controlling HIV/AIDS. Notwithstanding the high HIV infection rate in the Caribbean (2.3%), Cuba has the lowest rate of HIV/AIDS infection (0.05%) in the region because of its excellent health care system and the attention that it provides to such diseases. Because of this, the UN System in Cuba which helps in HIV/AIDS research is expected to become the center of a medical alliance to hasten efforts to suppress this disease in accordance with the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

Cuba asserts that a highly infectious and deadly disease like HIV/AIDS cannot be suppressed unless governments muster the political will to provide excellent, timely and affordable, if not free, medical treatment. US institutions like the MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Harvard University contribute to Cuba's research fund.