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HINGGIL SA INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS LAW**

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by **George Kotsakis**
Chairperson - Migrante Melbourne

Australians were the world's first to stand up and win an eight-hour working day. Stonemasons from Sydney in 1855 and the stonemasons in Melbourne in 1856 -having had enough of the long working hours - went on strike and demanded to share equally the hours between work, leisure and rest.

In 1886 workers of America demanded an eight-hour working day and had to go through a bitter struggle to win. Two years later in Paris an international congress of working men (the Second International) passed a resolution to make May 1 an international date to celebrate the victories of worker in all parts of the world. Since then, May 1st has been the date celebrated internationally to reclaim and reaffirm all that the workers had won through bitter struggles.

Today we mark this day with great trepidation. The workers are once again in the meat grinder. The hard-earned industrial victories are being systematically and wantonly snatched away by Corporations who control the politics of this country. Through shrewd designs and maneuvers, deceit and cunning, laws are passed by the politics that have greatly undermined - if not completely - the Australian workers and the workers of the world. This erosion of workers' rights cuts across the spectrum of society.

Look at the Sensenbrenner-King Bill in the USA. This bill pits immigrant workers against its locals. It legislates that undocumented workers are criminals, grabbing work that are supposed to be for the Americans. What we are supposed to understand here is that without these undocumented workers, the American economy will not prosper. It has been an age-old defense mechanism of politics to blame someone or something else for the country's ills which nobody can or refuses to put right. The supreme first world country - the USA - has spawned a fascist doctrine of suppression, intimidation and coercion to deal with its people's escalating poverty . If American society is in crisis, what about the rest of the world? What becomes of so-called third world countries like the Philippines? Look at France which recently experienced massive protests from young people defying its regressive and youth-biased labor laws. It is always the workers to blame and to carry the load the capitalist don't want to carry.

Yes, what about the Philippines? Marginally, it is subsisting; operating on a shoestring, foreign aid, loan bail-outs and remittances from Filipinos overseas. Its workers have been clamoring for a wage increase of a paltry sum of P125 (A\$3.48)/day for the last 6 years. Bayan Muna representatives in congress have not had the opportunity to win a concession for the workers. Instead they are under the protection of the house speaker for rebellion charges concocted by President Gloria Arroyo. This P125/day

wage increase is not even sufficient anymore as petrol prices have increased five times in the past four months and more is to come. Prices of basic goods have increased and a family of six will need to earn P546.80 (A\$15.20)/day while the highest minimum wage, in the National Capital Region, is P325 (A\$9.03)/ day. What was Pres. Arroyo's response? A VAT (value added tax or GST) increase of 2% (from 10% to 12%), a P20 allowance, and nothing on the wage hike. Not to mention increasing incidents of disappearances, killings and torture of labour representatives.

Since when did the Australian workers had a wage increase? Within the past decade the trend has been an individually negotiated wage, contractualisation, longer working hours measured in terms of productivity, retrenchment, and brutal enforcement of anti-union policies. Australians are due for another wage adjustment as the price of petrol increases as well as the other goods that are dependent on this product. What has become of our duly constituted politicians who are supposed to look after the welfare of their constituents? Where are they and what are they doing? Instead they have passed fascist laws in anticipation of the crescendo of the citizens' outcry.

The fight for decent wages is just and urgent as the people are buffeted by escalating prices of basic necessities that are the result of the government's implementation of anti-people policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization.

The rest of the world is in the same situation grappling against the tentacle of globalization, the so-called 'free market,' and privatisation - fancy names for a distinctive term "Imperialism". The Transnationals and the Multinationals have so controlled the world that they will eventually have the righteous anger of the toiling and exploited masses.

Workers of the world unite... there is no greater unity than that, if ever the workers who shape this present world into existence will survive. "United we stand, divided we fall" is an old battle cry in every rally and march; giving meaning to a struggle that is ever continuing in this time of big monopoly capitalism.

Workers of the world unite! All of what is happening in this time and age is an all out war against workers by the greedy Capitalist thinking of "only for itself and no one else."

Workers of the world unite! You deserve to be the masters of this world for you are its maker and without you nothing can be achieved. It is time to take your place in history. **Claim what is rightfully yours!** ■

MIGRANTE AUSTRALIA NOW IN PERTH!

A number of migrant workers, laborers, professionals, youth and students, and long time Australian citizens - attended the inaugural meeting of Migrante Perth on 8th of April 2006

Gino Lopez, one of the lead convenors, said, “the formation of Migrante Perth came at a time of biggest influx of Filipino migrants, mostly contract workers, to Western Australia in 15 years.”

The assembly agreed as one to pursue activities that promote the rights and welfare of Filipinos, including overseas contract workers, in Australia and link them up with the struggle for social justice, human rights, and national democracy in the Philippines. It also aims to conduct community education on issues confronting migrants here in Australia as well as conditions faced by extended families and relatives in the home country. One of the founding members commented, “I have learned so much more about the Philippines here in Australia than all my years of living in the home country. My involvement with Migrante has enabled me to do so and helped me get through very difficult situations I faced as a contract worker.”

The group has lined up various cultural, sporting, social, and political actions for the whole year. Projects include a cultural show to raise funds for Migrant Shelter, “gong” making, a joint art exhibit of Filipino artists in Perth, education sessions on industrial reform and the like.

Just recently, Migrante Perth supported a young Filipino-Australian swimmer who participated in a national



qualifying competition in Sydney and achieved 6 personal best records. The group also participated in an Easter picnic where Migrante introduced the KGB band, a group that plays traditional Filipino gongs and drums. In the same event the group engaged people in discussions and signed them up for a petition drive against changing the Philippine constitution. ■

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About Batingaw

Batingaw is a bi-monthly newsletter expressing views, news and analysis from Migrante Melbourne. An important aspect of developing this newsletter is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of the Philippine and Australian struggles for justice, democracy and fair-go.

Contributing to Batingaw:

Articles, photographs, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent electronically to: melbourne@migrante.org.au. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

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MAY DAY MESSAGE

RESIST THE IMPERIALIST PLOY TO SILENCE THE VOICE OF THE WORKERS WORLDWIDE

From the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1st Movement) Philippines



Visitors of KMW from labor unions of various countries participate in the march and program. Some are members of the International Labor Solidarity Mission (ILSM) which will conduct fact-finding missions on specific cases and work areas from May 2-5. They will present their findings to the public on May 7.

Photo courtesy of Arkibong Bayan

In commemoration of the International Labor Day, we salute the workers of the Philippines and workers all over the world. We celebrate Labor Day today - the most important event for us workers, a day symbolizing all the victories of our struggle against capitalist domination, exploitation and oppression - as imperialism intensifies its attacks to reverse the same victories the working class has paid for in sweat and blood. Whatever rights the workers and all oppressed peoples of the world still enjoy today are due, to a large extent, to our organizations and trade unions' militant resistance to the brutal attacks of imperialism.

Resolving the Crisis of Imperialism at the Expense of the World's Working People

Imperialism is desperately trying to solve its crisis by imposing its neo-liberal agenda on all countries and peoples of the world. It uses so-called multilateral instruments like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the Free Trade Agreements, and others to subjugate weaker capitalist countries, strengthen its neo-colonial dominance of the

third world and disempower the world's working masses and people.

The impositions of these imperialist-controlled agencies pushed almost all nations in the world to execute policies attacking labor rights such as wage freeze and promotion of labor flexibilization that negates the working masses' right to security of tenure, to join or form labor unions, to living wage and benefits, to humane working conditions, and other basic rights.

Labor laws and constitutions are being changed throughout the world to do away with all social guarantees demanding respect of the rights of workers and other toiling masses and to ensure their total subjugation and slavery.

Consequently, an increasing majority of the working masses of the world are wallowing in poverty, working under the most inhumane conditions and without rights, while the fruits of their labor are concentrated into the hands of a decreasing number of monopoly capitalists. > *continued next page*

Celebrating the International Labour Day in the Philippines - 1 May 2006

Worse, with the United States instigating and leading it, imperialist powers are using the fraudulent “*war against terrorism*” to justify their scheme to re-divide the world, to repress dissent, and to attack all those who defy them. This fascist war aims to terrorize not only the progressive workers and their organizations but to cow into submission all the world’s peoples.

Recently, in Nepal, thousands of workers were unjustly arrested and detained, harassed and put to surveillance. At least 344 protesters were injured and eight protesters have lost their eyesight forever when the state’s military forces attacked their demonstration. In France, the massive and sustained protests of the youth and workers were suppressed through the imposition of a three-month long state of national emergency.

In the Philippines, 200 political activists in 2005 were added to the thousands killed due to their involvement in the struggle for genuine trade unionism, national sovereignty and against imperialism. Worst, old cases of rebellion are being revived or fabricated against progressive party list leaders (or the “*Batasan 6*”) to kick them out of the Philippines’ House of Representatives.

In Colombia, trade unionist such as those in Coca-Cola and Nestle are being killed. In Turkey, political repression is at worst. In Iraq, workers continue to suffer the effects of the continuing US aggression and illegal occupation. In India and Pakistan, members of trade unions and progressive groups are being abducted and subjected to interrogation. In Australia, unions are being attacked because of their resistance to labor law reforms. In Iran, hundreds of workers and their families were arrested for waging a struggle to demand the recognition of their right to form labor unions. In the US, Canada and Europe, workers’ strikes are being met with brutality, unjust penalties and legal suits.

Rising Working Class Resistance Against Imperialist Onslaught

Workers and Trade Unions worldwide are increasing their resistance against the assaults of imperialism and their puppets. Protests and other forms of struggle are advancing both in developed and underdeveloped countries, from north to south, from colonies and semi-colonies, and other nations asserting their national sovereignty. The general strike of the people of Nepal for the return of

democracy against the dictatorial rule of King Gyanendra effected the restoration of parliament. The United States, realizing the people’s anger at its role of keeping the fascist monarchy in power, was also forced to evacuate its embassy personnel. In France, over two months of regular demonstrations against the CPE (First Employment Contract) brought over three million people out on the streets that forced government to withdraw the legislation.

Student groups and trade unions have proclaimed this an “*authentic success*.” They continue to strengthen their ranks to prepare for the upcoming battle against Sarkozy’s new bill on the Prevention of Delinquency, which critics say will criminalize the youth’s resistance and will lead to further relaxation of labour laws.

In the United Kingdom, workers are waging crippling strikes in defense of their pension plans. And in the belly of the beast, the passage of the draconian anti-migrant Sensenbrenner Bill or the HR 4437 sparked the mobilization of two million people in Los Angeles alone, the biggest protest action in US history. The bill stands to criminalize all undocumented persons and those who “*assist*” them.

Other notable struggles are those of the workers and peoples of Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Germany, India, Philippines, South Africa and South Korea. These and the recent victories of the workers and peoples of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela and that of Cuba demonstrate the growing strength of the world’s workers and peoples resistance against imperialist plunder and war.

Advance the Global Workers’ Resistance

Workers worldwide must forge a stronger and broader unity against all impositions of imperialists and other exploiters around the world. We must advance the struggle against labor flexibilization, resist the creation of new anti-labor laws, and demand for increase in our wages and the improvement of our quality of life. We must exercise vigilance and strengthen our militant actions against all efforts of Imperialists and their client governments to silence our voices and further diminish our share of the fruits of our labor. We must continue to forge linkages with trade unions and the working class of the world in resisting all forms of imperialist attacks.

End Global Poverty and Hunger!

End imperialist Exploitation and Oppression!

Workers and All Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!

TAGALOG

MENSAHE MULA SA ACTU HINGGIL SA INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAW



Sharan Burrow,
President, ACTU



Mga mahal na kaibigan,

Nangyaring sumulat ako sa inyo dahil sa maaaring maging puwersa ang mga ginawang pagbabago sa mga pang-industriyang relasyon ng Pederal na Pamahalaan sa inyong komunidad at iba pang mga pang-etnikong komunidad sa Australiya.

Noong Hulyo 1 nagawang kontrolin ng pamahalaan ni John Howard ang senado at maaari itong magpasa ng anumang batas na ibig nito. Ipinatalastas ni John Howard na gagawin niya sa ubos ng kanyang makakaya ang kapangyarihang iyon upang baguhin ang mga batas ng pook ng pagtatrabaho natin, na siya namang mag-aalis ng mga mahahalagang batas natin ukol sa mga manggagawa na ating pinaghirapang matamo.

Hanggang ngayon, ang pagkakaroon ng trabaho sa Australya ay nangangahulugan na noon pa na posible para sa bawa't isa, kasama na ang migrante at iba pang mga pamayanang etniko, na magkaroon ng pag-aasam na disenteng buhayin ang kanilang mga pamilya. Ating ipinagmamalaki na naiwasan natin ang istilo ng sistema ng pang-industriyang relasyon ng Estados Unidos hinggil sa kakaunting mga karapatan ng mga manggagawa at masyadong mababang minimum wage. Sa ilalim na plano ng Pederal na Pamahalaan, magbabago ang lahat ng iyan:

- Lahat halos ng mga manggagawa ay mawawalan ng proteksyon laban sa hindi makatarungang pagpapa-alis sa trabaho;
- Ang pamaraan ng pagtatakda ng minimum wages ay magbabago at mababawasan ang minimum wages;
- Ang safety net ng awards ay aalisin at papalitan ng apat na minimum na mga kondisyon;
- Mapipilitan ang mga manggagawa na umayon sa pang-indibiduwal na kontrata para babawasan ang kanilang mga kondisyon at suweldo;
- Maraming mga probisyon, tulad ng overtime rates para sa Sabado' Linggong pagtatrabaho ay mawawala; at
- Mas magiging mahirap para sa mga unifyinging tulongan at suportahan ang mga manggagawa.

Ang mga manggagawa mula sa mga pook ng di-nagsasalita ng Ingles ay kumakatawan na nang mas malaki sa mga manggagawang tumatanggap ng pinakamababang sueldo at sa kaswal na pagtatrabaho. Ang mga iminungkahing mga pagbabago ay magkakaroon ng seryosong bigat doon sa tumatanggap ng minimum wage at doon sa mga dumedepende sa awards para protektahan ang kanilang kita at mga kondisyon. Ang mga may mababang sueldong mga trabahador na mula sa mga pook ng di-nagsasalita ng Ingles, lalo na ang mga kababaihan, ay mas madaling madamay tulad ng dati.

Mahalaga na ang lahat ng miyembro ng inyong komunidad ay alam ang ganitong pag-atake sa kanilang mga karapatan sa pagtatrabaho. Tiyakin ninyo na ito na ang alam ng inyong komunidad ang mga iminungkahing pagbabago at may oportunidad na salungatin ang mga pagbabago sa pamamagitan ng :

- pagmumudmod ng mga nakalakip na polyeto sa pamamagitan ng sariling mga network;
- pag-aayos ng pulong nga inyong mga kasapi upang mag-usapan nang husto tungkol sa mga isyu;
- pagpasa ng isang resolusyon sa pagsalungat sa mga pagbabago sa mga forum ng inyong komunidad; at
- pagsulat sa Prime Minister, kay John Howard, at sa Industrial Relations Minister, na si Kevin Andrews, sa pagsasaad ng inyong pag-aalala at pagsisikap na magkaroon ng isang pulong para pag-usapan ang mga pagkabahala.

Ang mas maraming impormasyon, kasama na ang isinaling mga materyales, ay makukuha sa ACTU website www.rightsatwork.com.au. Malugod na tanggapin ang oportunidad na mangampanya nang sama-sama upang salungatin ang mga hamong ito sa mga karapatan ng mga manggagawa at dadalo ako sa anumang mga pulong na mga pamayanang etniko sa abot nang aking makakaya. Para sa karagdagang impormasyon o pag-aayos para sa isang tagapag-salita mangyaring makipag-ugnay kay Lyndy McIntyre sa ACTU sa 03 9664 7350. ■

RP: One in Four College Graduate this Year will be Jobless

At least one in four college students who graduate this year will be unable to find jobs, according to independent think-tank IBON Foundation.



...majority of the graduates who can't find employment here may opt to work abroad.

IBON Foundation, Inc. is an independent development institution established in 1978 that provides research, education, publications, information work and advocacy support on socioeconomic issues.

Figures from the Commission on Higher Education shows that there will be some 447,847 college graduates for school year 2005-2006. But the January 2006 Labor Force Survey shows that only 98,000 wage and salary jobs were created during the survey period, as opposed to own-account and unpaid family work.

According to research head Sonny Africa, majority of the graduates who can't find employment here may opt to work abroad. But according to Philippine Overseas Employment Administration estimates, there are only some 250,000 new hires of overseas Filipino workers annually.

Applying these trends into 2006 means this year's graduates will be competing for only some 348,000 jobs, and nearly 100,000 graduates may be unable to find work, he said.

Just as bad, those graduates who do find work may have to settle for jobs below their educational qualifications, Africa added. He pointed out that only some 20%-30% of either wage and salary jobs or overseas employment could be said to require college-level skills, hence most of our graduates may work at jobs below their credentials, and may even earn far below what should be expected of their level of education.

The difficulty local graduates have in finding rewarding jobs highlights not only the failure of the Arroyo administration to meet its self-set employment generation targets, but the bankruptcy of its economic policies as well.

MAY DAY RALLY AND FESTIVAL

Unite and Mobilise Against the IR Laws. Stand up for Democratic Rights

Sunday, 7 May 12.30 pm Victorian Trades Hall Council

corner Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton

1.00 pm - March through the city and back to Lygon Street

Followed by speakers, family activities, stalls, music and food. There is also a concert and snacks at the meeting room one, ground floor, Trades Hall after the rally. Join the singing of progressive songs and struggle songs sung by workers and activists for generations.

Indigenous

It is a soothing feeling that in the age of international migration, multiculturalism, the concept of home being redefined continuously and the struggle of indigenous peoples everywhere for their culture to be recognized and respected, one can find comfort that one can be indigenous internationally.

BY CAESAR BEN BASAN A. BAROÑA *First Published at Bulatlat.com*



IIC delegates in a workshop on indigenous musical instruments.

PHOTO BY CAESAR BEN BASAN A. BAROÑA

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia - Even indigenous people cross international borders. My first reaction was “What? An international meeting of Igorots in Australia?” The occasion was the 6th International Consultation (IIC) headed by the Igorot Global Organization and the venue was in Melbourne. Their theme was: “A more tolerant world through cultural sharing.” Igorot is a collective term for people who have their roots in the Cordillera Region in Northern Luzon. The Igorot culture is a dynamic mix of indigenous ways of living and Christian religious influence, a palette of highland culture and being Filipino.

My reaction was not one of balking discrimination - though there is such in Philippine society - but because my idea was that Igorot people were only confined to the Cordilleras. But the Filipino Diaspora - the phenomenon describing the mass exodus of Filipinos from dire conditions in the Philippines to every corner of the globe - also includes Igorots. While one can make a comment on the type of people who could afford to attend the event, it doesn't deviate from the reality that Igorots are also scanning the international horizon for the perceived lack of opportunities in the Cordilleras. It is a tribute to the continuing ties to the Cordilleras that Igorots all over the world gather to remember their ancestral land.

I have ancestry from the Cordilleras, you see, and the consultation provided me an opportunity to get in touch with such roots. I surmise this is a feeling shared by anyone with indigenous blood with a strong tradition and culture of community and sharing.

So I got to cover the event for an Australian community radio station. At the start I jived with a group of Igorot youth from different parts of the world: from the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. All of them would relate later how they regarded their identity as a mixture of cultures, an integration of the old and the new.

While in the Philippines, the Cordillera Day was being celebrated, I was glad to have been able to attend the 6th IIC if only to get in touch with people of the same ancestry.

The first day's mood was spiritual, as the national anthems of the Philippines and Australia were followed by a welcome ceremony by an Australian Aboriginal Elder of the Wurundjeri people. Joy Murphy started a smoking ceremony to invoke

“There was a momentous minute when one of the Igorot dancers spontaneously asked to gather with the Aboriginal dancers. He gave their jackets as a gesture of brotherhood and solidarity.

In return, the Aboriginal people gave them their boomerangs.”

Internationally



spirits. The hotel venue may have done something to impede the ceremony, as Murphy claimed that there was something wrong and the ceremony wasn't going so well.

Cultural presentations also greeted the delegates.

Igorots danced the different versions of the *gangsa* and *pat-tong*, as distinguished by the different provincial interpretations. Ifugao people, for example, would have a different version of the dance ceremony from the people of Kalinga.

Aboriginal groups like the Mur Toong Ba Marndall or Thunder and Lightning Dancers also didn't fail to impress the audience with their renditions of traditional dances that they claim to be an extension of traditional people's ways. The young men dancers are part of the Yorta Yorta and Gundindjmara peoples in Victoria. The dancers had traditional body markings as a reminder of how their ancestors fought and danced on the land before them. They believe their ancestors are still watching over them.

There was a momentous minute when one of the Igorot dancers spontaneously asked to gather with the Aboriginal dancers. He gave their jackets as a gesture of brotherhood and solidarity. In return, the Aboriginal people gave them their boomerangs.

In the following days, while at the same time that I was letting the atmosphere of Melbourne seep in with walks through Victorian buildings, the sight of the Yarra River, Federation Square, Melbourne trams and shops, the program of activities highlighted the situation in the Cordilleras. Even though the group was comprised of different sectors of the Cordilleran region - former government officials, professionals, media, educators and students - their vision for the progress of the Cordilleras binds them. Speakers talked about the negative social impact of mining on the communities, the vanishing cultural heritage in the context of tourism and the so-called globalization, the cultural effects of migration, requirements for sustainable electric power distribution and supply system and empowering indigenous communities through renewable energy. A Caucasian philanthropist even decided to donate a considerable amount of counterpart money for the effort, I suspect because he was inspired by the continuous talk about Igorots having a spirit of community and sharing.

Workshops were also held to the enjoyment of the audience. The delegates learned how to play the *gangsa*, how to sing the *salidummay* and how to make *tapuy*, or rice wine.

One of the youth delegates who came from the U.S. was tasked to present the perspective of Igorot youth. Fina Pengosro, from San Francisco, California, was supported by other youth whom she asked to share the stage. The session provoked vigorous discussions as the elders asked a few questions. What cropped up was that the older generation had to better understand where young people are coming from, given the generation gap and the different social and temporal contexts.

On the other side of the official conference room, a trade exhibit was held to showcase the different handicraft products from the Cordilleras. I had the chance to talk with some of those tending the stalls and found myself being asked for advise on how to market their products in Australia and about employment opportunities in the Land Down Under. This only reflected what they expressed to be limited opportunities in the Philippines.

Having the occasion to mingle with fellow Filipinos in a gathering is always a delight in any country. The event was also special in being able to have a caressing reminder of a culture I can be proud of. It is a soothing feeling that in the age of international migration, multiculturalism, the concept of home being redefined continuously and the struggle of indigenous peoples everywhere for their culture to be recognized and respected, one can find comfort that one can be indigenous internationally.

REFLECTIONS

LESSONS FROM MY ANCESTOR

by Fe Nina Reyes

4 85 years ago* to this day Lapu-Lapu ancient tribal chieftain of Mactan, Cebu province in the Philippines killed Ferdinand Magellan, defeated his Spanish troops and with this victory, thwarted Spanish incursion into the Philippines for more than 30 years. (*On April 27, 1521)



The Spanish had guns and a variety of weapons. Lapu-Lapu and his men had bolos - like gigantic knives - certainly no match for guns and 40-inch swords. It wasn't until more than 40 years after when the Spanish returned with their superior firepower to the Philippine islands that they then managed to finally subdue their rulers (called datus and rajahs) and claimed the islands for the Spanish Crown.

It is said that other datus around Lapu-Lapu impressed by the superior Spanish weaponry were less inclined to confront the Spanish in outright warfare, in such open, bloody struggle. Lapu-Lapu is now considered as the first native Filipino leader to defy European incursion into the Philippines.

Half my bloodline is from Cebu which effectively makes Lapu-Lapu my ancestor. In the stand he took against the invading Spanish, the importance of "struggle", "freedom" and "identity" are applicable to my Australian-Filipino predicament.

In this Australia which I have seen evolve for the last 30 years, life has been so good, so replete of milk and honey - unlike the degrading and desperate impoverishment of the Philippines - who wants to know about "struggle"?

Yet now more than ever to "struggle" against the reversal of workers' rights in Australia is so crucial. The new Industrial Relations laws effectively destroy over 100 years of Australia's enviable worker-biased employment legislation fought for so hard by Australians themselves in the early 1900s. These new laws dismantle the system of laws which guaranteed Australians a minimum wage for so much work per hour, 4 weeks paid holiday, sick leave entitlement, compensation for accidents at

work and other rights which belong to human beings who produce profit for their employers by providing brain and physical skills in return.

Do I hear Molotov cocktails being thrown on the streets like in EDSA during the street revolts against Ferdinand Marcos? No.

Do I hear non-stop talkback shows, vehicles beeping for hours, people banging doors, windows, pots and metal to protest against unfair laws and injustice as in South America or Paris? No.

Lapu-Lapu and his men fought and struggled against foreign invaders of their land. They fought for their freedom.

In Australia freedom from foreign occupation and exploitation has never been a life-or-death issue for century after century unlike in the Philippines which was colonized by the Spanish for over 300 years, then by the Americans from the 1890s to the present time.

The Philippines has been the dumping ground for US unwanted crops and the source of dirt-cheap rural products like tobacco, abaca, rice for the US under unfair trade law acts and practices instituted by the American government at the start of its direct rule of the Philippines from late 1898. The system of distribution of large tracts of valleys, mountains, fertile farmlands, cattle lands, fishing grounds, coastal areas by the Spanish to the Filipino elite loyal to them was taken over by the American government after the retreat of the Spanish military and government from the Philippine islands.*

Few Filipinos know that the Hukbalahaps or Huks unlike their "bad guy" image cultivated in the popular press were crucial in helping the US drive the Japanese out of the Philippines in the Second World War and whose guerillas were later hounded, executed (on numerous instances by beheading) by the US government and military. Few know because the history of the Philippines has been rewritten by the American government and military in cooperation with the IMF and World Bank.*

REFLECTIONS

In comparison, Australia's Anglo-Saxon history of 230 years arguably could not be said to have been as bitter, desperate and bloody as that of the Filipinos. Indeed, with the fairly peaceful establishment of the Australian federation, if one has never had to fight for one's freedom against centuries of invasion as in the Philippines, why should one even understand or realize the necessity of vigilantly guarding this freedom all the time?

Yet now more than ever, critical vigilance of the real, everyday freedom of Australians is crucial. The new anti-terrorism laws - which have barely caused a blink of an eye in your average Aussie - directly threaten the freedom of citizens to recourse to legal protection. These laws, for someone like myself from a country colonized for centuries, born out of bloody wars and struggles, have struck me immobile with unspeakable fear.

These new anti-terror laws mean that if anyone is picked up by "anti-terror" personnel - police, paratroopers, military, agents - on suspicion of anti-terrorism (this reads: "even if there is absolutely no evidence of "terrorist" involvement but the suspicion happens to be in the minds of the 'anti-terror' guardians") - that unfortunate being can be kept imprisoned somewhere hidden without access to family, friends, lawyers for a number of weeks, and who knows, might never be found again.

As James Pilger pointed out on ABC tv's "Lateline" program, the British are under similar laws now. BUT they can fall back on the UK Bill of Human Rights for protection if picked up under such anti-terror laws. Australia has NO such similar Bill.

Why aren't the streets full of angry, shouting protestors against these anti-terror laws each day? Why aren't the switchboards of radio and tv stations being jammed every day with phone calls about these laws when it is our very own personal freedom that is under threat?

It is not just Lapu-Lapu's struggle for freedom which has a direct bearing on my Australian-Filipino life. Lapu-

Lapu had no problems with his identity. He knew who he was: a respected, renowned ruler. He knew who he was in relation to the lands and seas around him, in relation to other communities not under his rule and in relation to his people and followers. He knew the boundaries of his lands and his culture. He knew he wasn't Spanish, American or Chinese.

He was Lapu-Lapu ruler of Cebu. You see, he wasn't like confused about who he was: he was pretty clear about his identity I reckon. And putting his life on the line for his followers and against the Spanish (Magellan was a Portuguese soldier paid by the Spanish Court) underlined even further Lapu-Lapu's identity: he was not his colonizer.

I've always been unsure about my identity. I grew up Hispanised and Americanised and then - Australianised! To add to the mixture, one of my fathers is French - so I'm also "Frenchised". Yet being in Lapu-Lapu's bloodline and from a country of freedom fighters,** it is so foreign to my being not to "struggle" and not to fight against the curtailment of rights and freedom under the new industrial relations and anti-terror laws in Australia. These laws are the more powerful because of their insidious and untested nature but clearly concrete and terrifying effects on human rights and freedom. These laws constitute a silent but very real invasion of every Australian.

These laws need to be fought in the same way that my ancestor fought without hesitation against the colonizers of his lands. I envy Lapu-Lapu. That his heart, soul and mind were as one and undivided against an invading force. Knowing him in the small way that I do, I understand now why for 30 years of being "Australian", I still feel foreign. Lapu-Lapu's blood is still my blood: and I will never be rid of it.

This piece is for the clarification of my identity and the values I stand for. This piece is for freedom and struggle as Lapu-Lapu lived it. This piece is for you Lapu-Lapu wherever you are.



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Migrante Melbourne holds free migration seminar

By Charo Pompa



In a bid to give comprehensive information on sponsorship, Migrante Melbourne conducted a free migration seminar attended by members and non-members at Walker Close Community Centre in Altona North, Victoria on Sunday, 23 April 2006.

Chairperson of Migrante Melbourne, George Kotsakis, led the event and emphasized the reasons of holding a seminar. He also mentioned the current economic situation in the Philippines that forces more than 2,000 Filipinos to leave the country each day in order to have a

decent living while Filipino residents in Australia are decisive to help their relatives through sponsoring them.

Mr Reyvi Mariñas, the keynote speaker and a practicing migration lawyer and the legal consultant of Migrante Melbourne, discussed sponsorship on both temporary residence visa and permanent residence visa schemes. In particular, he gave an overview of sponsorship in each visa category including business temporary working visa, student visa, spouse and parent visa and skilled migration visa and the procedure on how to apply and where to lodge the application.

Most of the questions raised at the forum were about standard business sponsorship (subclass 457). This category appears to be of particular interest to most audiences who wanted to sponsor overseas workers to work in Australia on a temporary basis. Some also asked about skilled sponsored visa category, which is applicable for those who wish to migrate in Australia or obtain permanent residence onshore under the General Skilled migration program and can be sponsored by a close relative in Australia.

The main focus of the seminar was about Sponsorship and the legal requirements and obligations for potential Sponsors, in case they wanted to sponsor someone under business, student, spouse, parent and skilled visa categories.

International Mission Probed Labor Killings in the Philippines

World labor leaders recently visited the Philippines to investigate killings of labor leaders and repression of the sector.

More than 30 delegates from 12 countries including the United States, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Bangladesh and Nepal have fanned-out to Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Negros Island and Mindanao region on May 2 to 5 to conduct fact finding missions on the killings, forced disappearances and attacks on labor leaders and workers.

The International Labor Solidarity Mission is organized by the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER), Center for Trade Unions and Human Rights (CTUHR) and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT).

Migrante Melbourne Joins Community-Union Picnic in the Western Suburbs



Over 1,000 local workers, families and members of the community gathered on 2 April in a workers and communities solidarity picnic organised by the Western Suburbs Community and Unions Coalition to protest the new IR laws.

The lively gathering heard speakers from Migrante Melbourne, union leaders, churches, and locals fighting to improve working and living conditions in their own communities.

From the Filipino Australian Diaspora

Japanese-Filipino Children Granted Nationality

Migrante Melbourne extends its thanks to friends and networks here in Australia who supported the campaign for Japanese- Filipino children and their Filipino mothers to Grant Japanese Nationality to the children.

Kalipunan ng mga Filipinong Nagkakaisa (KAFIN) in Japan, a member organisation of Migrante International launch an international signature campaign last January 2006. The letter of appeal signed by supporters from around the world was presented to the Minister of Justice at the 38th Section of the Civil Court, Tokyo where the appeal of nine Japanese-Filipino children to change provisions of the law that grant Japanese nationality to children of mixed parents was filed.

Once again, we see the success of a campaign that is supported by Filipinos and friends worldwide. Congratulations to our compatriots in Japan who were involved in the campaign. Please read below: a news article from *The Japan Times*: Thursday, March 30, 2006

Ruling slams unequal bias in paternity recognition

The Tokyo District Court granted Japanese nationality Wednesday to nine Japanese-fathered children born out of wedlock to Filipino women, ruling that a legal clause that bars such status only if the father acknowledges paternity after birth is unconstitutional.

The kids, who currently hold Philippine citizenship, filed to be recognized as Japanese nationals in February and March last year, but their applications were rejected on grounds that they did not meet the necessary conditions.

The children, aged 6 to 12 and residents of Tokyo and Chiba, Saitama and Kanagawa prefectures, had lawsuits filed on their behalf in April. The court said the Nationality Law clause that only allows Japanese-fathered kids born out of wedlock whose fathers admit

paternity before birth to acquire Japanese nationality runs counter to the principle of equality before the law.

The same court made a similar ruling last April, granting Japanese nationality to a 7-year-old boy.

That decision was overturned by the Tokyo High Court in February, which ruled that even if the clause is invalid because it runs counter to the principle of equality before the law, it did not automatically create a system that granted Japanese nationality to the boy.

Presiding Judge Hiroyuki Kanno said in Wednesday's ruling it is "an immense disadvantage" for a kid born out of wedlock to a foreign mom and Japanese dad who doesn't come forward and admit paternity until after birth.

Get Involved!

Name: _____

Address: _____

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I would like to:

- become a member of Migrante Melbourne
- be updated with information from Migrante Melbourne
- donate to Migrante Melbourne



Become a member/supporter of Migrante Melbourne

About Migrante Melbourne:

Migrante Melbourne is a voluntary community organisation of Filipino and Filipino-Australian migrants and workers promoting and upholding their welfare, human rights and workers' rights. It also deepens members' awareness of the root reasons of the Filipino hegira to over 180 countries and settlement issues in their adopted homelands.

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

SEND TO PO BOX 606, LAVERTON VIC 3028 or
CALL US on 1300 3666 74

Filipinos Join Million-Strong March in New York for Immigrant Rights

New York— More than 200 Filipinos from the New York and New Jersey joined over 1 million immigrants in a rally and march for immigrant rights in Manhattan's historic Union Square.

Launched as "A Day Without An Immigrant", a national call for boycott of work, school, shopping, and selling rapidly spread across several US cities, including New York City, where blocks of businesses in all five boroughs shutdown in solidarity with the struggle of immigrant workers and families against the broken US immigration system. Students all over the city also participated in massive walk-outs from classrooms to join immigrant workers and their families in a massive march from Union Square to Foley Square.

The boycott call gathered support as a national tactic of exercising economic muscle to expose the economic value and contribution of immigrants in the US, while legislators in Washington DC continue the heated debate over immigration law.

The Justice 4 Immigrants Filipino Coalition (J4I), a broad formation of Filipino organizations and individuals addressing US immigration policy flaws and demanding for more pro-migrant reforms, marched side-by-side with Filipino alliance, Bayan USA, in a significant show of Filipino community force and unity amongst the city's multi-ethnic mosaic of a march.

Amongst the majority of Latin American marchers, J4I was easily identifiable with a large and tall Philippine flag, as well as two giant-sized puppets of Filipino workers reading "Yes to Legalization, No to Criminalization" and "Faster Visa Processing, More Family Visas Now".

Filipino marchers mixed Spanish chants with Filipino chants, invigorating the agitated crowd, and offering them a taste of Filipino cultural pride. From the towering buildings of Manhattan, onlookers from above cheered the sea of marchers below on Broadway, making noise from their windows by banging pots and some even throwing confetti.

Among the convening concerns of the J4I member organizations was the swift passage of US House Resolution 4437 in the House of Representatives last December. The bill would stand to criminalize undocumented persons and their supporters. J4I has led several Filipino



The Justice 4 Immigrants Filipino Coalition (J4I) demanding for more pro-migrant reforms march side-by-side with Bayan USA, in a significant show of Filipino community force and unity amongst the city's multi-ethnic mosaic of a march.

community actions in Queens calling for a scrapping of the bill, and other "copy-cat" bills in the US Senate.

Of the 4 million Filipinos in the US, approximately 1 million remain undocumented or *TNT* [*tago-ng-tago*]. Over 70% enter the US through family sponsorship. Yet because of the high-volume of family visa applicants from the Philippines, Filipinos are given one of the longest wait periods for family visa processing— up to 23 years.

Bayan USA, a chapter of the nationwide alliance in the Philippines, played a convening role in the broad May 1 Coalition of over 100 immigrant community and progressive labor organizations responsible for adapting the national call for boycott and organizing the Union Square mobilization, one of the largest demonstration's in New York City history. Both Bayan USA and J4I are active members of the May 1 Coalition's Steering Committee.

Marching organizations and groups from the Justice 4 Immigrants Filipino Contingent included Philippine Forum, Anakbayan New York/New Jersey, NY Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, Migrante International, Movement for a Free Philippines, Filipino-American Human Services Inc. (FAHSI), Sandiwa National Filipino-American Youth, Critical Filipina/Filipino Studies Collective, Kinding Sindaw, Bayan USA and others.

MIGRANTE STANDPOINTS

Migrante Melbourne Opposes Charter Change

Migrante Melbourne is strongly opposed to the latest moves by the Philippines' Arroyo administration to change the constitution. This self-serving initiative of the administration has urgent and far-reaching implications on the country's politics, economy, sovereignty, patrimony as well as the people's civil liberties.

Charter change has been touted as the solution to the current economic and political crisis. It is regarded by the administration as a requirement for a country "poised for take-off".

But beneath the promises and illusions generated by charter change are the sinister and self-serving moves to perpetuate an illegitimate regime in power, open the country's economy and patrimony to unbridled foreign exploitation and plunder, further degrade our nation's sovereignty and threaten the already limited and fragile constitutional provisions on human rights and civil liberties.

Among the contentious and objectionable recommendations of charter change are the:

- a. postponement of the 2007 elections and the lifting of term limits for elected officials, while allowing Arroyo to serve as transition head till 2010
- b. allowing 100% foreign-owned corporations to own land and exploit our natural resources, public utilities, education institutions and even the mass media
- c. removing or amending provisions on civil liberties
- d. removing provisions that limit the martial law powers of the president
- e. removing or amending provisions on nuclear weapons and foreign troops

Charter change is a surefire formula for national regression because it will reverse whatever limited and positive provisions left in the constitution. It will bring the country from bad to worse. It will blast the country back to an era of direct colonial rule and martial law, of US bases and lifetime dictators.

A plebiscite is targeted for June 2006. The administration is going full-blast with its plan. Charter change is therefore a challenge that we must urgently take up.

Migrante Melbourne calls on all freedom-loving and patriotic Filipinos and Australians to unite and stand against this latest maneuver to hold on to power amidst charges of electoral fraud, corruption and human rights violations. Let us not fall for the illusions peddled by charter change. Let us join hands and link arms with our Filipino compatriots in resistance.

Call Migrante Melbourne on 1300 3666 74 and support the ongoing campaign against charter change.



**MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM MIGRANTE
MELBOURNE ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

Events and Activities

07 May 2006: MAY DAY RALLY AND FESTIVAL

Sunday, 7 May 12.30 pm Victorian Trades Hall Council
corner Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton

1.00 pm - March through the city and back to Lygon Street
Followed by speakers, family activities, stalls, music and food. There is also a concert and snacks at the meeting room one, ground floor, Trades Hall after the rally. Join the singing of progressive songs and struggle songs sung by workers and activists for generations.

12 May 2006: Edna Ryan Award 2006

DESCRIPTION:

12 May, Friday, 6:00pm, Sydney School of Arts & Mechanics, First Floor, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney CBD
Jane Brock of Migrante Australia, Sydney is an Awardee for Community Activism.

01 JULY 2006: TIPANAN SA MELBOURNE - WINTER DANCE PARTY/FUND RAISING ACTIVITY

DESCRIPTION:

6 to 11 pm Civic Centre, Cnr Railway Ave. & Crown St., Laverton. BYO; Or you can purchase food & drinks at the venue. Price: Adult - \$10.00; children under 16 - \$5.00; Children under 6 - free. A chance to be with friends and acquaintances. A day of fun ... dancing and dancing; singing; games and raffle. Call **1300 3666 74**

July 2006 - Celebration of Songs and Dance

DESCRIPTION:

Cultural Presentation / Fund raising activity for Migrante Shelter. Organised by Anibeth Desierto and Migrante Perth
Venue: University of Western Australia Club, Hackett Drive, Crawley, W.A.

Contact persons: Anibeth Desierto - Ph. 0402 941935

30 SEPT & 1 OCTOBER 2006: THEATRE PRODUCTION SUMMER BUTTERFLY

ORGANISED BY: DULAANG BAYAN

DESCRIPTION:

“Summer Butterfly” will be shown on September 30th and October 1st of 2006. The venue will be at the Clocktower Centre Theatre located at 750 Mount Alexander Road (Corner Mt Alexander & Pascoe Vale Rds, Moone Ponds).

Matinee show starts at 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM. Ample and secure parking space are provided to accommodate patrons and supporters alike. Cost of ticket will be \$25 for all seats and all are encouraged to book early as seats are limited. Please ring Danny Fernandez for booking and inquiries on 9369 3158.



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Migrante Melbourne : : PO Box 606, Laverton, VIC 3028