



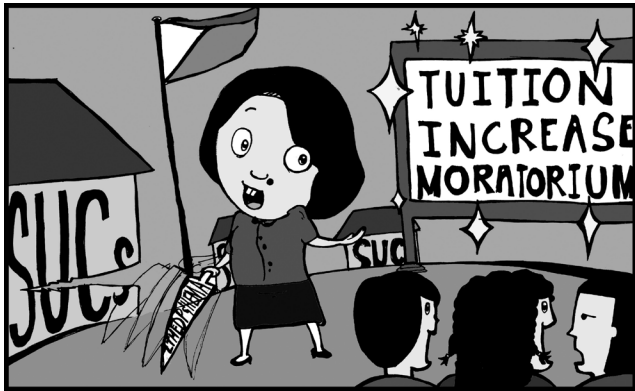
OBLATION

ang opisyal na pahayagan ng
UP Diliman - University Student Council

Issy 1 | Hunyo 2008

AS UP TURNS 100 NATIONWIDE CRISES IN EDUC, FOOD & ENERGY CONFRONT ISKOLARS NG BAYAN

by Bikoy Villanueva &
Krissy Conti



As the University of the Philippines celebrates its centennial, it does so at an awkward juncture as *iskolars ng bayan*, together with the vast majority of the Filipino people suffer from worsening economic conditions brought about by simultaneous crises in basic goods and social services. The past months saw unprecedented price increases in food and energy making it increasingly difficult for the *iskolar ng bayan* and his family to cope with the increasing cost of education in the state university.

EDUCATION

Even as President Gloria Arroyo announced a moratorium on tuition increases in state colleges and universities, *iskolars ng bayan* are not bailed out from paying their high tuition and laboratory fees as UP President Emerlinda Roman, evident in a recent Inquirer.net video, fittingly declares UP exempt from the moratorium, and from any possibility of a tuition rollback.

Over the summer vacation, several administrative departments in the university – specifically in the Colleges of Engineering and Mass Communication – asked for increases in laboratory fees. The University Student Council, involved in discussions and dialogues at the College of Engineering, pushed for the deferral of the increases. The USC argued: "The tuition and other fee increases (TOFI), now on its second year of implementation, promised for better facilities. Why then are students still burdened with even more exorbitant fees?" In the College of Mass Communication, laboratory fees in the Broadcast Department have been submitted to the Board of Regents (BOR) for approval while fees in the Film Department are pending.

FOOD

Around the world, rising food prices have made basic staples like rice unaffordable for many people. Involuntary hunger in the Philippines – where one lacks anything to eat – according to the

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USC & Dorm Councils Assert Right to Decent Student Housing

by Jaque Eroles

The USC and the different Dormitory Councils initiated campaigns for students' rights to accessible and quality lodging inside the campus. The initiative was due to overwhelming complaints received by the USC regarding the admissions procedure in residence halls. The USC sees the root of the problem, not just on the flawed procedure, but rather on the overarching issue of the lack of budget for student housing.

It was year 2007 when the Rules and Regulations Governing Residence Halls in UP Diliman was revised and implemented without prior consultation with the students. The main highlights of the new dorms admissions policy was the centralization of application process to the Office of Student Housing (OSH), the new requirements and pointing system set, and the de-categorization of dormitories where distinction between graduate, undergraduate, and freshmen dorms were removed.

The first year of implementation of the

said rules already received much criticisms and complaints from dormers, especially those who were displaced. This year, the 2008 version was approved and implemented again without prior consultation. Complaints of late release of results, flawed pointing system, inefficient service, wrong room assignments, inconvenient processes of appeal and displacement of dormers were the common concerns of the students and dormers.

To address these concerns, there were numerous attempts from the USC and the Dormitory Councils to request a dialogue with OSH Director Ruby Alcantara in order to present and negotiate with her office the consolidated resolutions and recommendations formed through the prior meetings and consultation done with the dormers. However, the USC's request was denied and a USC member was actually threatened by the Director that she might

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Vinzons Upgrade Launched with UP Centennial Celebrations

by JM Tuazon

Students rightfully took center stage as the entire UP community welcomed the university's 100th year of existence last June 18. Among a host of celebrations to commemorate UP's centenary, student-led activities and initiatives were the ones that grabbed the people's attention and support.

After taking their oaths before the UP community in Quezon Hall, members of the University Student Council (USC) proceeded to Vinzon's Hall to unveil one of their benchmark projects as the Centennial USC: the renovation and restoration of Vinzon's Hall—historically the bastion of student movement and empowerment—in a long-term joint initiative with the UP students aptly dubbed "Vinzons UPgrade."

The renovation of Vinzon's Hall is a project that has been planned for the past years by past USC's and student leaders. This year, Chairperson Third Bagro through an ad hoc Committee headed by Councilor Joseph Gutierrez & Architecture Rep. Marc Virtucio, aims to restore the glory Vinzon's Hall once had during its golden years of service to the students. Vinzon's Hall has always been remembered as a haven of student activism, housing student institutions as the USC and the Philippine Collegian.

"We now have enough funds to kick-off Phase 1 of Vinzon's UPgrade, thanks to alumni and certain individuals who have expressed their support for the project," Gutierrez said. Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, himself a former USC Chairperson, has reportedly donated 8 Million pesos to the project.

The project consists of four phases, with Phase 1 commencing this year and is projected to be completed before the year ends. It includes renovation of the building's facade, lobby, front lawn, rooftop, basement, USC Office, Alcantara Hall, comfort rooms and the entire electrical system.

Phases two to four includes minor renovations and integration of student services (such as photocopying, printing, tambayans, mini-cooperative, dining, and the like), and are projected to begin once funds are made available.

During the launch of the initiative, performers from the student body—such as UP Indayaw (a streetdance performing

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A Freshman's Call to Action

by Aya Escandor

As delivered at the UP Theater on June 10, 2008.

Good morning. I am Soraya Elisse Escandor, a freshman of the College of Engineering. I happen to have an older sister here in UP. She entered UP in 2004. After two years, in 2006, the 300 percent tuition increase was implemented. She, of course, was not affected by it, but I was. And like so many others, my family was.

From paying 300 pesos per unit, we now have to pay P1,000 per unit. That would make my tuition fee roughly around P20,000 for 18 units. Compare that to my sister's tuition, which is roughly around P7,000 for the same number of units. P20,000 and P7,000 pesos have a very big difference, don't you think? What we used to pay for one year's worth of education is now insufficient to pay for one semester! Isn't that unjustifiable?

I've heard of stories of other UPCAT passers who came to UP in the hopes that they can study in one of the most venerated institutions in the country. They applied for

the STFAP, expecting to get in the lower brackets because their parents have meager earnings. And yet, because of a flawed bracketing system, they were placed in Brackets A and B. Faced with an unaffordable tuition, they were forced to withdraw from UP and return to their provinces.

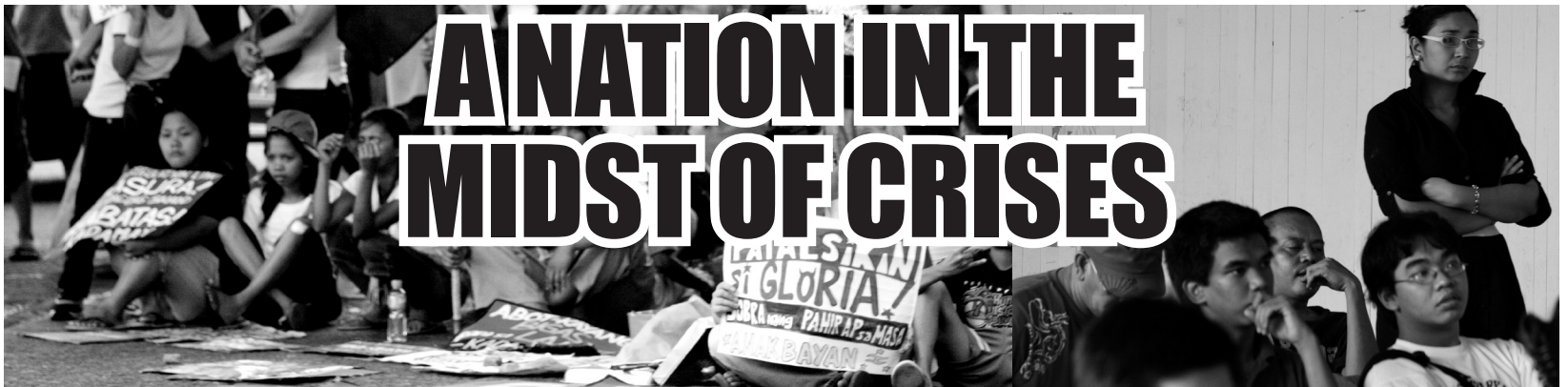
In spite of the prevalence of these scenarios, the UP administration has yet to address this problem. Judging from its behavior, one would even think that the UP administration is in denial of the extensive misery it has caused.

Now, in other countries, such as Canada, the cost of their education is paid for by their citizens. The money of the people goes back to the people. Their governments ensure that basic essential services are given to its citizens. And that is why those countries are ahead of us.

In the Philippines, however, education

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A NATION IN THE MIDST OF CRISES

by Fudge Tajar

As we commemorate the centennial of our beloved university, we cannot help but discern the different issues that are facing our beloved nation at present. This only proves that as we confront tough issues that are emerging in our university, we must be audacious enough to deal with our national issues as well. As iskolar ng bayan, we are an essential component in changing a nation engulfed in a chronic crisis brought about by a semi-feudal and semi-colonial status of our country. Let us not disregard the fact that we are the "University of the Philippines"--we are the "University of the Nation" making us "scholars of the people".

Let Us Rice Against the Crisis

Policies of globalization on rice, i.e. trade liberalization (allowing rice imports), privatization (clipping NFA powers), and deregulation (lifting of government production and price support), which the government started to implement in the 1980s, has worsened the state of food security, not only in the Philippines, but in the rest of the world.

Rice production remains small-scale and productivity is low. Philippine average rice yield per hectare is stagnant. Since the 1990s, the country's rice yield has averaged at 3 metric tons per hectare even as it records yearly increases in production. According to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the required production for the Philippines to sustain food security is 5.4 metric tons per hectare. This situation is even aggravated by the increasing instances of conversion of rice farms to commercial uses and conversion of crops from rice to export winners, which has put the country in constant state of crisis in its rice supply. Landlessness and the absence of government support through production and price subsidies leave millions of Filipino rice farmers at the mercy of big landowners and traders. That is why for a long-term solution to this predicament, a genuine agrarian reform must be implemented.

Furthermore, the government has practically stopped subsidizing local agriculture for decades, and can be seen from the meager budget allocations received by the agricultural sector. We see the same trends with the increasing budget cuts that UP and other state universities in the country that has led these universities to resort to different commercialization schemes and to increase in tuition. Worse, the funds intended for these sectors and other social services are being drained off to corruption.

The increasing inaccessibility of our basic staple and of education has made the lives of many Filipino youths and their families harder and the opportunity to make their lives better difficult to reach. With the increase in the price of rice, other basic needs will relentlessly increase in cost, thus making the lives of many Filipinos increasingly more difficult.

Repeal Republic Act 8479 or the Oil Deregulation Law

We are very much aware that the oil industry is very vital to the nation's development. Our country is a sanctuary of oil and energy sources such as the Malampaya and Nido in Palawan and the Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao. However, these and other potential energy sources like coal and geothermal are left for exploration and development in the control of foreign

corporations, making us heavily reliant on imported oil products and its unending swelling of prices and eventually buying our own locally sourced new energy and power sources from foreign firms at higher costs.

One concrete, urgent and practical solution to the ills of high oil prices is to repeal the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Law.

The Filipino people has suffered its wounding impacts such as under deregulation, oil companies are no longer compelled or bound by law to justify the increases. Under the same policy, Oil Price Stabilization Fund (OPSF) or subsidies on oil products were removed. The fund could have still been utilized to mitigate the effects of oil price hikes more so that the public is demanding for transparency and accountability from its government. And lastly, the declaration that the law would result to effective competition and accessibility with the entry of new industry players did not result in competition and affordability nationwide, particularly in the rural areas.

The monopolistic control of transnational corporations was further encouraged by the Oil Deregulation Law. The existence of Petron, Royal Dutch-Shell, and Chevron (formerly Caltex) in the oil industry is the immediate reason for the overpriced and incessant increase in oil prices. They shamelessly and uncontrollably dictate the price of oil, pressure countries, even OPEC member countries, to create the market beneficial to their aim of earning billions of dollars.

Imagine, six oil giants controlling the oil industry from exploration up to retailing of petroleum products making them the richest and most powerful block in the world. Even the Supreme Court in its decision on the constitutionality of the 1996 version of the oil deregulation law affirms the existence of such foreign oligopolistic control in the local oil industry. That is the reason why it is disgusting to hear from the government that they can't do anything to lower the oil prices.

Oil is a deliberately essential commodity and must, therefore, be developed and nationalized, under which price is controlled, for the benefit of the people. Through nationalization and regulation, there would be room for reforming purely profit-oriented mechanisms into a socially responsible handling of the oil industry. With a government at the forefront of managing the oil industry, it has the capacity to direct the downstream oil industry with the national thrust towards economic development.

Such schemes of deregulation also lead to the oil cartel which continues to manipulate and bloat the prices of oil products. To the youth, such policy of liberalization has also led to the increasing commercialization of education by reducing the government subsidy to education.

Power to the People

The impetus behind the current crisis is the restructuring of the sector through the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, or EPIRA, which was one of the first laws signed by President Gloria Arroyo in 2001.

Amidst the flurry of accusations between private distributor Manila Electric Company (Meralco) and state-run National Power

Corporation (Napocor) over unjust charges, one fact remains clear: privatization and deregulation of the power industry – distribution, transmission and generation – is at the heart of high electricity bills.

Consider the multitude of unjust 'pass-on' charges levied by Meralco on its customers. These include system losses, in which power lost through pilferage and technical problems are passed on to consumers and P500-million a year of Meralco's own power consumption which is similarly reflected in electric bills. There is also a reported plan to pass bad debts incurred by the power distributor on to consumers.

These charges have been approved by the government Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), which is tasked to regulate the rates of electricity distributors. Although blame has been placed on the ERC's lax regulation for such excessive 'pass-on' rates, in truth the regulatory environment has become lenient because of deregulation of the power sector and while moving towards full privatization.

In the light of high costs in power rates, the reversal of privatization of the entire power sector becomes an increasingly viable answer. This entails the repeal of EPIRA law, reversal of the privatization of Napocor's generation assets, and government control over the entire power sector – distribution, generation, transmission and supply.

Of course many would question the return of state control over the industry, particularly in light of corruption allegations against Napocor such as its alleged over-billing of customers by some P10 billion and its purchase of overpriced coal for its power plants.

However there remains no substitute for responsible state control in an industry such as the power sector whose natural monopolies will inevitably be exploited by private interests for maximum profit even at the expense of the public. And as a state-run industry, the people must have the right to subject the power sector to scrutiny and demand transparency in its operations. Effective state control remains the best solution to address high power rates—even as it is acknowledged that leaving the power industry to an administration known for allegations of corruption, unaccountability, and subservience to elite interests' compromises achieving a pro-people power sector.

Let Us Stand and Take Action

The persistent crisis that the Filipinos at the grass roots level and even the middle-class have been experiencing is simply a manifestation of a grave failure in leadership under the Arroyo administration. If such demands and solutions to the rice crisis, oil crisis and electric power quandary are not met immediately, it is only imperative for the youth and the rest of the Filipino people to continue the people's urgent call for the removal of Gloria Arroyo from office. We must assert our right for a nationalist, scientific and mass oriented education and along side with this let us assert for a dignified life of our nation. ■

A Freshman's Call...

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apparently does not come first. Our government chooses to give the biggest chunk from our National Budget, not to education, not to health care, or to any basic essential service for that matter. Our government chooses to spend what our parents worked hard for on foreign debt. The money of the people does not go back to the people but to foreigners. Yet, that debt is not even ours to pay because it was incurred by Ferdinand Marcos and other unscrupulous presidents.

My point here is that UP is a government institution, meaning that it is the public that pays for the cost of our education. The government should allocate sufficient funds to UP so that the Filipino youth can have the quality education which they deserve and are entitled to. After all, the only reason behind the 300 percent tuition increase is the lack of adequate funds.

Instead of struggling to get more funds from the government, the UP administration chose to pass on the cost of education to its students. And that is wrong, if only because it is short-sighted. Not only does the 300 percent tuition

increase fail to address the root cause of the problem, it also deprives many Filipinos of their basic right to education.

Presently, the UP administration continues to tolerate the government's neglectful attitude towards the people's basic rights. In the process, the administration also punishes the students and betrays the Filipino people. This alone is enough justification to resist and protest.

With the skyrocketing prices of fuel, rice and other basic commodities, coupled with the high cost of education, how can we expect a better Philippines when the wide majority cannot even pull themselves out of poverty? How can the Filipino youth participate in national advancement when institutions of learning fail in their duty to educate them?

Are we the type of students that would rather go to the malls than speak up about our rights? Are we the kind of freshmen students who see suffering and do nothing? Are we the kind of iskolar ng bayan who feel no obligation to country and to society? As UP students, we are old enough to know that this cannot and should not go on.

It is not enough to merely ask for what must be ours. We must struggle, we must act. ■

OBLATION

UP Diliman - University Student Council

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Chairperson's Message



Welcome back fellow UP students! And on behalf of the University Student Council here in Vinzons Hall, Happy Centennial!

This year, we aim to give you the USC that you deserve. Thus, your Centennial USC envisions itself as an independent, progressive and consultative body that will aim to unite the students towards national consciousness and service. That's why we have prepared, through our 18 committees, a year-long plan of campaigns, activities, and services that would cater to the diversity present in our university.

Aside from the already institutionalized ACLE (for the benefit of freshmen, it's short for the Alternative Classroom Learning Experience) and the UP Fair, the USC plans to restore and strengthen Vinzons Hall as our student center. We would push for a framework on consultation that would be recognized by students in their interactions amongst themselves, and also by the administration when it comes to matters that relate to students rights and welfare. We will continue to be at the forefront of discussing national and local issues and lend feasible alternatives to the status quo. Finally, we will pioneer more activities and projects that aim to capture the imagination of the Iskolar ng Bayan not only for school spirit and pride, but more importantly for a mindset of service to our fellowmen.

But it only through your active participation and constructive assessment can we make these plans truly meaningful and successful. And so, with much verve and anticipation, we call on everyone to join us in these pursuits. *Inasahan namin ang tulong at suporta ninyo.*

Maraming salamat at sana'y magkita-kita at magkakilala tayu sa mga susunod na mga gawain ng USC. Mabuhay ang Iskolar ng Bayan, at nawa'y mabuhay tayu bilang mga Iskolar para sa Bayan! ■

Herminio "Third" Bagro III

EDITORIAL

A few weeks ago, the Arroyo administration declared a tuition increase moratorium on all State Colleges and Universities (SCUs) and discouraged Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) from increasing tuition and other fees. According to Malacanang, this is providing relief to the Filipino people, given the current economic conditions that the country is facing. All these declarations have been found as a mere propaganda ploy by the Arroyo government.

Rising prices of oil, rice, transportation, among others, are part of the undeniable factors that burden the iskolars ng bayan and their parents. Notwithstanding all these, the students are burdened further by the relentless laboratory fee increase proposals such as those in the Colleges of Engineering and Mass Communication, despite the already implemented tuition increase in the University of the Philippines. More so, President Arroyo and her cohorts in the UP Administration found it fit to declare UP exempt from such a moratorium, as though the UP and its constituency are exempt from the extraordinary challenges faced by the average Filipino family in these most trying of times.

In all these, the iskolars ng bayan need to understand that such pronouncements all ring hollow in the face of the seeming insurmountable problems facing the Philippine education system, in which the UP are among those that are being used as guinea pigs for commercialization schemes. We need to understand that the structural problems in higher education are rooted in the failure of government to appreciate the central role of state higher education in national industrialization and genuine economic development. Instead, the present government and the UP Administration slavishly embraces the entire neo-liberal economic policy imposed by multinational financial agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund where the abandonment of social services, like state higher education, is among its basic tenets. Such a policy has been crystallized as policy by government through its Long Term Higher Educational Development Plan (LTHEDP).

It is quite clear that the solutions being offered by the Arroyo regime are sham tricks and bogus pretense that deceive the youth and the Filipino people to make it seem that serious steps are being undertaken to resolve the crisis of the educational system. These are mere smokescreens to hide the fact that it is the government itself that has actually aggravated the already chronic economic crisis faced by the country.

Thus, it is imperative for the iskolars ng bayan to unite today and stake their constitutional claim to their right to education, by standing firmly for the rollback of the UP tuition increase, and the eventual junking of the UP tuition increase policy itself.

Rollback the 300% tuition increase, Stop laboratory fee increases! Junk the Tuition Policy, Fight for Greater State Subsidy for UP and Education! Oust GMA! Struggle for a Nationalist, Scientific, and Mass-oriented Education! ■

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Beyond Outreach: The USC Summer Community Fair

by Airah Cadiogan

Part and parcel of the USC's historic tradition of service is its direct and active involvement in the issues and affairs of the UP community. The USC has always recognized that crucial to the holistic formation of UP students are the services rendered by non-academic sectors of the university – from the manininda to the drivers to the contractual employees like the janitors and gardeners.

Continuing with this tradition, the USC held the year's first community fair, titled "Lakbay: A Journey through the UP Communities", last May 18, 2008. The whole day affair was organized by the committees for Community Rights & Welfare and Education & Research and was held in Pook Libis, Barangay UP Campus. Similar to past community fairs, the venue was chosen in response to the current issues confronting UP communities; in the case of Pook Libis, it is the supposed relocation site of Village B residents (non-UP employees) who are now facing demolition to make way for the construction of the new DZUP tower.

With the kind assistance of Barangay Captain Isabelita Gravides and Barangay Kagawad Maxie Evangelista, the fair pushed through at the Pook Plaza where around three hundred (300) residents gathered to listen to relevant and timely lectures and discussions on the rice crisis (delivered by representatives from the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas), national situation of the urban poor (by KADAMAY), and energy-saving tips (by UP Engineering Radio Guild). Residents also lined up for simultaneous free legal advising

(courtesy of UP Pi Sigma Fraternity) and medical check-ups (courtesy of UP Manila medical interns Bojitt Herrera and Patricia Cielo; medicines donated by UNILAB), and were kept entertained by films screened by UP Sining at Lipunan (UP SILIP). Sinagbayan, along with patient members of the USC, also held performance workshops for the children. The children presented their workshop outputs (a high-pitched song/dance/acting number) towards the end of the night, which was then capped by the deep, haunting singing voice of CSWCD Representative Carmela Lagang.

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Ang Mga Komunidad sa UP at ang Iskolar ng Bayan

by Carmela Lagang

Kinikilala natin na ang mga pamayanan sa ating pamantasan ay bahagi na ng ating kasaysayan at hindi natin maitatangging ang mga ito ay mayroong malaking ambag sa pagiging institusyon ng U.P. Tunay ngang matatawag nating isang malaking komunidad ang ating unibersidad na binubuo ng iba't ibang sektor kung saan ang bawat isa ay magkaka-ugnay. Ngunit habang hinaharap ng unibersidad ang kanyang mga susunod na panahon pagkatapos ng sandaang taon ay higit tayong napailalim sa iba't ibang anyo ng komersyalisasyon, mula sa pagtaas ng matrikula hanggang sa pagbebenta ng lupa para sa mga malalaking negosyo.

Itu ay bunga na rin ng bagong UP Charter na masusuri nating hindi demokratiko at hindi maka-estudyante't maka-mamamayan. Nakasaad sa Sec. 22 sa ilalim ng bagong charter na ito ang 'maximization in utilization of land assets' ng UP at lalo pa itong paaitinging ng kasalukuyang proposal ukol sa 'Policies and Guidelines for the Informal Settlers in the Constituent University,' na inayon sa balangkas ng Urban Development Housing Act of 1992.

Masusuri nating ang nagaganap sa loob ng ating pamantasan ay ugnay at releksiyon lamang ng mas malawak na suliraning hinaharap ng ating lipunan. Ang mga programa na ipinatutupad sa ating unibersidad ay may pinanggagalingang mga mataas na polisiya ng national government at hindi natin maitatangging may nagaganap na malawakang demolisyon sa kalunsuran, ito ay bunso na rin ng pagbibigay daan ng pamahalaan sa mga proyektong pang-infrastruktura at mga komersyal na establisyemento nang hindi man lamang sinasagot ang responsibilidad nitong bigyan ng maayos na paninirahan ang mga mamamayan at tulad ng ginagawa nito sa sektor ng edukasyon kung saan mababa ang ibinibigay na subsidiyo ng pamahalaan.

Sa ganitong klaseng mga polisiya ay lalong mailalagay sa panganib ang kalagayan para sa karapatan sa paninirahan ng mga komunidad. Ang mga ganitong programang ipinatutupad ay dapat isinaalang-alang ng boses ng mamamayan ng UP, nararapat lamang na dapat nagkaroon ng konsultasyon at paghingi ng pag-ayon sa lahat ng mamamayan ng ating pamantasan.

Makikita nating mayroong mga programang naipatupad nang walang naganap na konsultasyon, isa na rito ang implementasyon ng One-Way Academic Oval sa unibersidad. Malaki ang naging epekto nito sa kabuhayan ng jeepney drivers at operators sa UP sa gitna pa ng patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng langis. Hindi namamantayo tulo sa mga programang maaaring makatulong sa pagbabawas ng polusyon sa ating kapaligiran, ngunit dapat ay inaalaran nang mabuti ang mga programa at hinihingan ng konsultasyon at pag-ayon ng maaaring maapektuhan upang sa gayon ay hindi makakasagka sa kabuhayan ng mga tao. Ang mga pamayanan at mga sektor sa ating pamantasan ay nararapat lamang na makalahok at maging bahagi ng decision-making body ng UP Administrasyon.

Sa papatinding pang-ekonomya at pangpulitikal na krisis ng ating lipunan ay lalong umiitig ang banta ng demolisyon, ang kawalang katiyakan sa paninirahan, ang mga programang maaaring hindi nakasandig sa kapakanan ng lahat. kaya naman mas higit ang pangangailangan ng sama-samang pagkilos at pagkakaisa ng bawat komunidad para labanan ang anumang anyo ng mga polisiya at programang maaaring tumapak sa ating mga karapatang pantao. Sa kabila ng mga suliraning hinaharap ng mga mamamayan ng unibersidad ay higit nilang hinarap ang hamon para manindigan. Sa hanay ng mga jeepney drivers at operators ay kanilang binuo ang All-UP Transport Alliance noong nakaraang Mayo at sa hanay ng mga pamayanan sa ating pamantasan ay kanilang binuo ang All-UP Community Alliance. Masigasig ang lahat na gumuhit ng paninindigan. Masigasig ang lahat sa paglaban, dahil sa mga anyo ng komersyalisasyon, hindi lamang mga mag-aaral ang naapektuhan, kung hindi buong komunidad ng UP. Malaki ang kahingian para tanganan ang kongkretong pagkilos at paglaban. Sa hanay nating mga estudyante, nararapat lamang na nasa likod tayo ng mga pananambitan at pangangailangan ng buong pamayanan at iba't-ibang sektor sa ating pamantasan. Ipagpatuloy ang oryentasyon sa paglilingkod sa sambayanan at gumuhit ng paninindigan sa mga tunggaliang nagaganap sa ating lipunan. Ito ay upang tingnan ang kahingian sa pagiging Iskolar ng Bayan. ■



June 26, 2008 marks the second year that UP students Karen Empeno and Sherlyn Cadapan went missing after being forcibly abducted by suspected members of the military in Hagonoy, Bulacan. On June 4, while the Court of Appeals was conducting a hearing on the petition to compel the military to surface the missing UP students along with other desaparecidos, members of the USC, in solidarity with other activists and relatives of Karen and Sherlyn, joined the picket in front of the second highest court in the country.

Members of the USC took their oaths of office before more than a hundred people at Quezon Hall on June 18, 2008



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AS UP TURNS 100...

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latest SWS survey, is at 15.7%, or equivalent to 2.8 million Filipino families.

When Agriculture secretary Arthur Yap denied a food shortage, he implied that the market mechanism was faulty: the system was padding the price of rice too much along the production chain. Rising prices are the consequence of a liberalized, deregulated industry. Very little support or protection is offered to the local industry so annual production, expected to hit 17.32 million metric tons by year-end, is less productive per hectare and more expensive by the kilo.

To resolve the present rice crisis and prevent another one, there is no other alternative but to ensure we meet our domestic consumption ourselves.

The USC's People's Struggles Committee in a press release said that, "The government should immediately increase its support to the National Food Authority (NFA) in its procurement of palay, dismantle the rice cartels and impose a crack down on illegal acts of price manipulation, implement a moratorium on the land-use conversion of agricultural land, and increase its investment in the agricultural sector." The committee also enjoined fellow students in the campaign for greater state subsidy and support for agriculture alongside the struggle for greater state subsidy for UP and education.

ENERGY

The Philippines is a net importer of energy products. Despite local resources, the country depends on international supply of oil, largely for the transport sector, and coal for power generation.

As capitalist speculation on the world market drives prices, the Philippines stands as a captive consumer, unable to affect trading and unwilling to reduce demand.

Initial government measures focus on subsidies and auxiliary solutions, among them P2 billion to provide one-time P500 handouts to so-called "lifeline" power users, P3 billion quarterly for transport sector diesel discounts, P1 billion for scholarships and loans for poor but deserving students, and another P1 billion for a facility that transport operators can tap to convert engines to use alternative fuel.

But as oil prices take a steadily growing toll, increasing for the 16th time this weekend, the pressure is on the Arroyo government to remove value-added taxes on oil and power.

Consumer advocate Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, estimates that removing the VAT will result in immediate savings of about P150 a day for jeepney drivers, P23 a day for tricycle drivers, P55 a day for fisherfolk, and savings of P68/per tank of LPG for household users.

The USC, in solidarity with the wide sector of Filipinos harshly affected by the unprecedented price hikes in energy, supported the transport strike that was held last May 12 together with various transport groups in UP. In its press release, the People's Struggles Committee of the USC also added, "The diminishing accessibility of oil and basic commodities to the majority of the Filipino people is tantamount to eradicating our right to a dignified life."

FAILURE IN LEADERSHIP

Some members of the USC believe that the chronic crises that Filipinos at the grass roots level and even the middle-class have been experiencing are simply manifestations of a grave failure in leadership under the Arroyo administration. They added that, "If such demands and solutions to the national crises are not met immediately, it is only imperative for the youth and the rest of the Filipino people to continue the people's urgent call for the removal of Gloria Arroyo from office."

USC & Dorm Councils Push...

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file libel cases against the involved student leaders should the meeting push through.

However, the USC stands firm in asserting the right to an accessible and quality student housing that is conducive for serious study and at the same time provides venue for social interaction. The University being grounded on the vision of providing democratic access to quality tertiary education for Filipino youth from different regions should likewise give priority to the construction and rehabilitation of residence halls, including the forming of an efficient system for admissions process.

The USC, with the dormers, now push for the immediate revision of the 2008 Rules and Regulations governing residence halls in UP Diliman, this time the drafting of rules shall have direct participation of students and dorm managers. Along with this, an efficient, transparent, and accountable admissions process should be ensured by the OSH, OVCSA and the Dorm Admissions Committee (DAC).

The student leaders also call on the OSH to focus on improving and alleviating the resources of dormitories instead of burdening itself with the tedious dorm applications process. Instead it should conduct comprehensive study on the current state of dormitories, feasibility of constructing additional residence halls, renovation of current dorm units and lobbying and asserting for additional budget for dormitories and allocation of funds for the improvement of dorm facilities. The USC sees that the additional subsidy for student housing is the only way to truly alleviate the problem of influx of applicants which cannot be properly accommodated by the current state of residence halls in UP Diliman. Currently, there is no additional allocation for residence halls despite its poor conditions. The USC shall also look into the discretionary fund from the Office of the Chancellor that was supposed to be used for renovations of residence halls.

Beyond Outreach...

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Notwithstanding the glitches encountered prior to and during the community fair, it was still on the whole, a successful summer undertaking. There were logistical lessons learned and personal qualms overcome, all of which will undoubtedly bode well for the next installment of Lakbay. There are also more students and organizations to involve in the coming semesters. Until then, however, the USC vows to keep struggling with the marginalized sectors of society and within UP to uphold their rights to basic social services, decent housing and livelihood, as well as their right to be represented in various committees set up to decide on issues that will unavoidably affect them.

In essence, the community fair is a venue for students to truly interact with members of the UP community, to understand their plight and know their issues firsthand. It should not be simply seen as a way to "reach out" to the less fortunate, as ordinary outreach activities aim to do. While one goal is certainly to bring immediate relief to those in dire need, the bigger and brighter mission of Lakbay is to educate ourselves on the workings of the society we are part of - to be one with the people we, mga iskolar ng bayan, must tirelessly strive to serve.



Members of the USC together with dozens of other UP students gathered at the Sunken Garden Grandstand last May 14, 2008 to hold an AIDS Candlelight Memorial, spearheaded by the USC Gender Committee

VINZONS UPGRADE...

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group), Bayhana (a jazz trio), Sitti ("Bossa Nova Queen" and School of Economics alumna) and the formidable UP Pep Squad drummers—graced the stage and showcased their talents for the crowd. Noteworthy alumni also took the stage and offered their words. The event was graced as well by the presence of the daughter of Wenceslao Vinzons, Mrs. Rona Carolina Vinzons-Gaite. To cap off the event, an Oblation Run, a tradition of the Alpha Phi Omega (APO) fraternity every year, was staged with 100 reported members streaking naked from Vinzon's Hall to the Oblation Statue.

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