

# **Students Lead the Militancy!**

Laya

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The whirlwinds of danger have raised around us again. Unfortunately for the archipelago, it was in its most literal sense. Over October and the beginning of November 2020, right at the tail end of the yearly typhoon season, five consecutive storms ravaged the Philippines, particularly the easterly provinces of Luzon and Visayas. Marikina and Cagayan are deluged. Bicol and Catanduanes are flattened. This all happened while the government continues to have no national plan for mass testing and continued mismanagement of the pandemic. Thousands are dead—victims of police killings, pandemic mismanagement, and now, typhoons.

The state's response to these consecutive calamities has been equally disastrous. The state as an institution has seized the functions of society into and for itself, which include pandemic and calamity response. Yet the state abdicates this responsibility. In the place of the state we saw an outpouring of previously-established and spontaneously-formed affinity groups to practice mutual aid.

## **New Wave of Student Militancy**

It is in the context of the Duterte administration's neglect and mismanagement that students around the country have decided that they have had enough. What began as a single student petition from the Ateneo de Manila University has ignited conversations all across the archipelago. At the moment of writing, students all over the Philippines continue to discuss and plan for a strike to protest the government. The whirlwinds of danger, both literal and figurative, have taken the archipelago by storm, giving the youth a clear idea of the inequity that exists in the society that they are a part of, and calls them to stand for the rights of their fellowmen in their most vulnerable hour.

Students have shown they have real power in their hands. The first call for a mass student strike—signed by more than five hundred students from the Ateneo de Manila University—forced the hand of school administrators to cancel classes for a week. Students from other universities like De La Salle University, the University of Santo Tomas, and the University of the Philippines–Diliman were similarly able to get their school administrations to cancel classes. Workers from the University of the Philippines–Diliman took the charge in declaring their own strike as well. Students and workers elsewhere are similarly agitated.

Student militancy is not new in the archipelago. In the dark days leading up to the Marcos dictatorship in 1970, students rallied against the budding dictator in a stormy period now known as the First Quarter Storm. One of the infamous episodes of the First Quarter Storm was the student insurrection known as the Diliman Commune in 1971.

Now history seems to be repeating itself with unprecedented student militancy under the budding dictatorship of President Duterte. The same president who has time and again allied himself with the Marcos family and who, months after his inauguration, arranged for a state funeral of the old dictator, triggering a wave of student militancy against the regime.

## **Push for a Self-Directed Militancy!**

As anarchists in the archipelago, we push for a self-directed militancy. This means that we prefer for struggles to be managed and directed by the people themselves. In labor, this looks like workers leading workers, with workers uniting and organizing among themselves without being bossed around by party cadre or union bureaucrats. In the student struggle, self-directed militancy means students leading students without intermediaries like student government or school officials. So initiatives like the call for a student strike by the Ateneo students are exactly the kinds of initiatives we anarchists want to amplify.

The latest news from Ateneo is that the Sanggunian—the Ateneo autonomous student government—failed a vote to formally endorse the mass student strike. To us anarchists, this only affirms that we cannot rely on official structures to push for the militancy we want to see. However to give credit where it is due, the Council of Student Leaders of the University of the Philippines Los Baños has officially declared a strike. We can only hope other organizations follow.

If the Ateneo strikers cannot secure endorsement from their Sanggunian, then perhaps they must direct their own militancy themselves. Perhaps they can form strike committees independent from their Sanggunian. Politics is too important to be left to elected officials, and more so the national politics against the state's disastrous policies.

A strike that spreads is a strike that wins. What the student strikers are already doing is to connect with students from other schools that want to partake in such a strike. Perhaps strike committees from various schools can federate with another and scale up their efforts.

The strike cannot be limited to the students. Unions and workers must join the fray. Indeed the faculty at the University of the Philippines–Diliman have taken the charge in this. Other unions have also endorsed the mass student strike.

But not all unions are so daring. Perhaps if formal union endorsement cannot be secured, rank-and-file and unorganized workers can also form strike committees in support of the student strikers.

## **Towards the *Welgang Bayan***

In the time of dictators and bonapartists, workers and students banded together for the *welgang bayan* (lit. peoples' strike; general strike). The *welgang bayan* has been used against the dictator Marcos and in the second People Power revolution.

Will these steps by students for mass student strikes lead to the *welgang bayan*? We can only hope so. And if these steps do lead to the *welgang bayan*, we must work with strikers to push for self-directed militancy against those that might co-opt or dilute the militancy.

As the Ateneo saying goes, "*Magis!*" (lit. more; excel). As the Lasallian saying goes, "Let us start the change we want to see; the change that begins in me." The Iskos have their honor and excellence and they have proven themselves time and time again. The Thomasians pride themselves in their commitment, compassion, and competence and have a history of militancy since the times of Burgos, Rizal, and Del Pilar.

These universities are not alone. In fact, this struggle for our lives, for our freedom to dictate our destiny, is the struggle of every student, in every institution across the archipelago! All schools, colleges, and universities have their own versions of our very native concept of *bayanihan*, that entails a camaraderie and solidarity where no one will be left behind. It is in our values and in our history that we can learn what it takes to take our liberty now.

Everything we need is already within reach. Alone we are weak but together we can be a whirlwind against the regime. Act now! The power to strike lies with you. Draw your friends and allies close. You are not alone.

No Online Classes Until Duterte Steps Down!

Support Student Strikes across the Archipelago!

Our Struggles Interlinked!

*Mabuhay ang welga!*

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