

THE SALARY TRAGEDY AND THE TUITION DECEPTION

What has been used by the administration of UP in the past to divide the University constituents, specifically the teachers and employees on one hand and the students on the other hand, should unite us now.

In the past few months, the issues of salary and wage demands of teachers and employees and the proposed increase in tuition fee have been used against each other. In dealing with the teachers' demand for salary increases, President Angara has been dangling the tuition fee increase before the teachers as a possible source for raising their salaries. In the same vein, in justifying the tuition fee hike before the students, Quezon Hall is citing the salary increase demands as one of the main reasons for the tuition fee proposals. Hence, in its typical divisive move, the Angara administration has contraposed students' interest with teachers' interest and with this, hoped to drive a wedge between these two sectors.

These two issues, however, should not be seen as two issues totally unrelated to, isolated from, and independent of each other. They should be treated as related questions primarily because both stemmed as resultant effects of a single problem.

The teachers' demand for just compensation and the administration's proposal to raise the tuition fee all boil down to one basic fact — the state's utter neglect of its responsibility to education in general, and to UP, as a state university, in particular.

The state's darellection of its responsibility to education is very well reflected in the appropriation of the national budget. Education, which used to get the lion's share in pre-martial law years has steadily skidded through the years while the military has been eating up bigger budget shares. Comparing this year's budget allocation of P8.4 billion pesos for the military to P5.6 billion for education speaks eloquently of the regime's priorities.

In the face of a crippling crisis, highlighted by two devaluations last year that battered the Philippine economy into the brink of collapse, the Marcos regime still had the guts to purchase 19 US Sikorsky helicopters, draining our dollar reserves by \$60 million and other non-productive inflationary infrastructure projects such as the Tagaytay Palace intended for the Reagan visit costing us P200 M and Marcos' image carved out of a La Union Mountain a la Mt. Rushmore.

All these ostentations display of extravagance ought not to be condoned. Not only because it is done by the regime to the detriment of education — which is a state function, a social service which should be rendered fully by the state — but more so because it contributes to the ever-worsening state of Philippine economy. The mismanagement of the Marcos regime and its misguided priorities have compounded the intense crisis brought about by the US imperialist plunder of our economy and the effects of the world capitalist crisis.

And this is precisely the reason why the teachers' demand for salary increases is just — because inflation has steadily eroded the real value of their salaries. Fact is, their demand for a 7-step increase, P500 cost-of-living allowance and additional 50% increase of basic salaries by June, would not even restore their salaries to its 1972 level.

And this is the reason why opposition to the tuition fee issue is just — because any increase in the tuition fee right now would be an added burden to the already hard-up students.

Part of the problem is really Quezon Hall's attitude toward the government's neglect and mispriorities. Instead of demanding for higher subsidy from the regime, the administration has concentrated its efforts in attempting to make the responsibility of providing relevant but cheap education to students and adequate

pay for the teachers the responsibility of the University alone. It accepts the fact that the meager budget allocated to UP is all the support the regime could give us, and it is therefore up to the University to generate additional funds. From this viewpoint emanated massive fund-raising activities, acquiring of loans, the further opening of UP to private enterprises, austerity measures and now, the fee increase proposal.

We denounce this stance by the administration because it covers up the state's responsibility to the University, and because it encourages the state more to continue with its mispriorities.

The tuition fee proposal should also be outrightly rejected because it paves the way for the commercialization of the UP education. It prescribes that courses geared toward higher paying jobs should collect higher fees from the students. The new fee structure that is based on the marketability of the course would actually make "in-demand" courses exclusive to the rich. Most affected by the new proposal are students of Economics, Business Administration, Engineering, Law, Medicine and those from the Asian Institute of Tourism. This new move would further aggravate the fact that UP has never been a University of the People — because its students do not represent the lower-income groups. Most importantly, the proposal would reinforce UP's supportive role to an economy controlled by US monopoly capital because marketable courses are those that "tie up with national development needs" which is dictated primarily by the demands of US economic interests.

We are fully aware that there would be other means aside from raising the tuition fee from which the teachers' salary increases could come.

One, if the regime could build palaces, and carve out the President's face on a mountain up north, if the regime could hold circuses like that coming elections for the Batasan Pambansa, an expensive rubberstamp which it supports annually to the tune of P134 M, why can't it grant the demands of the teachers? Two, from the national budget, why can't the regime rechannel military funds, and from the Office of the President to education in general, and to increase subsidy to UP?

There could also be a lot other sources. SAGIP-UP, in its letter dated February 2, to Pres. Angara, has presented clearly at least four means of raising the needed fund.

Judging from the present situation, there arises a need for closer unity among the constituents of the University to confront these issues, and to go beyond the confines of the University. For whatever problems that beset the academe are more manifestations of deeper societal problems. Given this proper framework, we can now move in one direction as a united force.

We support the teachers' and employees' demands for a 7-step increase, P500 cost of living allowance and a 5% increase in basic pay by June.

We support the students' opposition to the proposed tuition fee increase.

Concretely, we demand:

1. INCREASE SUBSIDY TO THE UNIVERSITY!
2. RECHANNEL MILITARY FUNDS TO EDUCATION!
3. INCREASE SALARIES OF TEACHERS AND WAGES OF EMPLOYEES!
4. OPPOSE TUITION FEE INCREASE!
5. INCREASE SUBSIDY TO SCHOLARS!
6. DEMOCRATIZE ADMISSION POLICY!

Justice for Aquino, Justice For all
UP Chapter, February 27, 1984

ATTEND!

Feb. 29

1 p.m. Youth Congress (Plaza Miranda)

11:30 UP Assembly time for Youth Congress, AS Steps

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