

Press Release

Rice protest flares up in Cavite

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Around two thousand workers and poor marched from the several towns of Cavite to the provincial warehouse of the NFA to press for sufficient supply of cheap rice to the communities and for a better system of distributing NFA rice. While the rally was ongoing at the NFA warehouse in Pasong Kawayan in General Trias town, protest leaders were in a dialogue with officials of the NFA.

“The ruthless inflation in goods and services, and the insufficient of supply of NFA rice is a national calamity whose damage is even worse than typhoon Frank. Relief operations are the immediate response to every national calamity, thus we demand access to cheap rice as economic relief,” explained Romy Cabugnason, Cavite chairperson of the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM).

The mass action was organized by PM, Alyansa ng Maralitang Pilipino (AMP), Samahang Nagkakaisa ng Cavite (SANAGCA), United Cavite Workers Association (UCWA) and Zone One Tondo Organization (ZOTO) with the bulk of the marchers coming from the towns of Rosario , Tanza, Cavite City , General Trias and Dasmarinas. The march started at around 7:30 am from two assembly points. One group marched from the Tejero Convention Center in the town of Rosario while the other from McDonald’s Manggahan in the town of General Trias . The dialogue between the PM, AMP, SANAGCA, UCWA and ZOTO leaders and NFA-Cavite officials commenced around 10:00 am even as the thousand protesters picketed outside the warehouse.

According to Ramil Cangayao, council member of AMP, “This is not the usual protest action that is all about shouting slogans but without palpable results. Instead we aim to pressure the NFA for concrete action that will ease the hunger of the workers and the poor. We call on our fellow Filipinos to action. If we want our daily bread then we must fight militantly instead of accepting injustice.”

The groups also insisted on a better scheme of distributing rice in the face of the dehumanizing effects of the present system. They were angry at the fact that NFA rice runs out for many who patiently waited in line, that the people are forced to stand in line under the heat of the sun or the cold of the rains, that there are no separate lines for the elderly and the pregnant, that ward leaders of trapos get a lions share of the rice delivery, and that NFA rice is not regularly supplied every day at the designated outlets.

Meanwhile Renato Magtubo, national chairperson of PM, asserted that “The hunger and poverty of the masses is the real state of the nation and not the lies that will be GMA’s speech at the coming SONA. As we demand for immediate relief from the economic crisis, we call for a reversal of liberalization, deregulation, privatization, cheap labor, labor contractualization and other pro-globalization policies.”