

East Java workers declare their opposition to presidential election

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Jombang — Thousands of workers have declared their opposition to participating in the July 8 presidential elections. The agreement emerged out of a mass meeting and consolidation by hundreds of trade union representatives held today at the Youth Social Development Building in Jombang, East Java.

One of the trade unions that declared its opposition to the presidential elections was the Independent Indonesian National Front for Labour Struggle (FNPBI-Independen). East Java FNPBI-Independent coordinator Afik Irwanto said that the failure of the world capitalist economic system has left Indonesia in crisis.

One of the flow-on effects of this is the destruction of the real sector and national productivity. As a result many companies have closed down and this has brought about a wave of mass dismissals.

In the end, according to Irwanto, it has been the little people and workers who have become the victims. "This is the evidence of the government's failure in developing an economic system that is self-sufficient and sides with the ordinary people", said Irwanto.

Irwanto went on to explain that the policies that have been taken up [by the presidential candidates] are largely an endeavour to attract sympathy from voters in the lead up to the elections. Irwanto said that they refer to them by the term "political bribes", such as the policy of reducing the price of fuel from 6,000 to 4,500 rupiah per liter, yet this has not been able to bring down the price of basic commodities.

"This because the current administration is still pursuing the economic concept of neoliberalism", said Irwanto accompanied by other trade union representatives.

Irwanto asserted that tens of thousands of workers nationally have agreed that they need a force that is solid, radical and genuine, namely trade union unity that is independent and uncontaminated by interference and the influence of other parties (non-cooptation and non-cooperation). This is in order that workers can bring down all of the obstacles that stand in the way of their struggle.

According to Irwanto, this is because the political elite cannot become comrades of the labour struggle. This includes the three pairs of presidential candidates

that are contesting the presidential election because they are still acting as lackeys for foreign interests and are faithful to neoliberal economics.

It is because of this therefore, that thousands of workers have declared their opposition to participating in the ruckus surrounding the 2009 presidential elections.

“They have already been proven to have failed in bringing welfare to the ordinary people. So there are no gains for us in taking part in the presidential election. Because what is currently needed by workers and the ordinary people is [genuine] prosperity and democracy”, he concluded.

East Java trade unions agree to boycott presidential election

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Judi Prasetyo, Jombang -- Workers from the Independent Indonesian National Front for Labour Struggle (FNPBI-Independen) have agreed to boycott the coming July 8 presidential elections by not using their right to vote or to golput. The agreement was kindled during a mass meeting held in the auditorium of the Youth Social Development Building in Jombang, East Java, on Sunday July 5.

The workers were doubtful because the presidential and vice presidential candidates that have emerged have already failed workers in holding the reigns of leadership. “All of them are [members of] the political elite who were once in government and all of them have failed fight for workers”, asserted East Java FNPBI-Independent coordinator Afik Irwanto.

During the meeting — which was also attended by a number of other Jombang trade unions — FNPBI-Independent warned workers not to be easily deceived or be put to sleep by the presidential candidates’ promises.

In addition to this, the workers also made six demands on the government. These were in the form of guarantees of the workers insurance scheme (Jamsostek), holiday bonuses, decent overtime wages, increases in the regional minimum wage, the abolition of contract labour and outsourcing and the freedom to organise.

“This is what we must continue to struggle for”, asserted Irwanto, who was spontaneously elected as the group’s spokesperson along with two other people from the East Java Labour Alliance.

According to Irwanto, the character of the presidential tickets of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Boediono, Megawati Sukarnoputri-Prabowo Subianto as well as Jusuf Kalla-Wiranto are clearly the same as they were in the previous era. By way of example, it was precisely when former president Megawati was in power that contract labour and outsourcing systems were put into place through Law Number 13, 2003 on Labour.

Juir, from the education division of the East Java Indonesian Trade Union Congress Alliance (KASBI) said that up until now there has yet to be a leadership figure that could become a motor for the labour struggle in Indonesia. "So, our [choice] to golput has a clear aim," asserted the man with a closely shaven head. (st8)

Notes:

Golput - Golongan putih or white movement meaning not to mark the ballot paper (leave it blank) or abstain from voting.

P.S.

* Translated by James Balowski.