

Asian

# Social Democracy

Journal

4<sup>th</sup> Edition / April 2012



**Social and Ecological Sustainable Design  
of Economic Development**

# **A New Paradigm for Development in Asia**

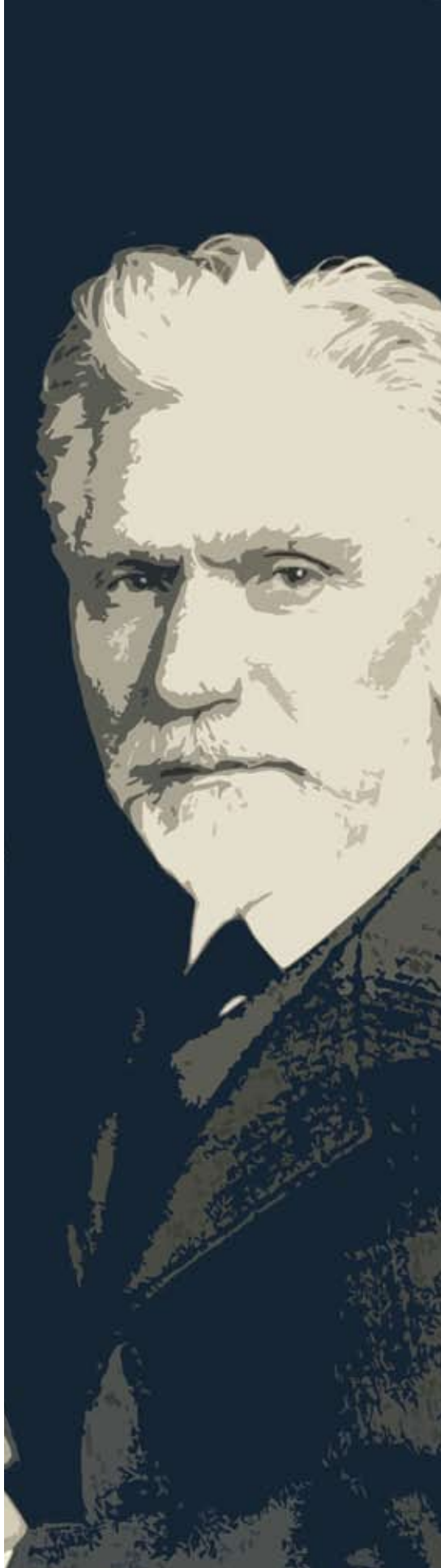
ISSN 2086-3713



9 772086 371312

“ But you will only agree with me  
that **we have to draw up**  
a programme which is not  
**exclusively socialist** but  
also **democratic.**

Otherwise we cannot claim  
the name of **Social Democrats**  
and think about a solution  
of the **social question”**  
(August Bebel, 1869)



## Table of Content

Greetings [4]

Toward Economy with Social-ecological  
Dimensions: ASIA HAS TO TAKE LEAD [6]

Redeeming Ideology [11]

Towards left of centre [14]

Narrating the Future  
An Examination of Neil Postman's Building a  
Bridge to the 18th Century [17]

Dismantling Coronarroyo,  
Sustaining the Momentum of Change [22]

**Editor in Chief:**  
Amir Effendi Siregar

**Deputy Editor:**  
Ivan Hadar

**Editorial board:**  
Martin Manurung  
Charles Santiago  
Mian Manurung  
Francis Isaac

**Editor/Publisher address:**  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung  
Jalan Kemang Selatan II No. 2A  
Jakarta 12730  
Phone: +62-21-7193711  
Fax : +62-21-717 91358  
Email: info@fes.or.id

**Publisher: \*)**  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

**ISSN:** 2086-3713

\*) soft file available in [www.socdem.asia](http://www.socdem.asia)



**Comrades,**

In this publication, you'll find some results of the Conference by Network of Social Democrats in Asia, July 2011, in Ulan Bator/Mongolia. The conference theme was "Social and Ecological Sustainable Design of Economic Development – A New Paradigm for Development in Asia". All participants agreed that "only via balance between economic growth, social justice, and environmental sustainability can we guarantee development and prosperity for all".

Special questions for many Asian countries are as follow: Given the dominance

of the neoliberal paradigm and the weakness of progressive movements in most countries, how can Socialdemocrats put forward their agenda of development? Has poverty worsened or improved after the Asian financial crisis and the failure of structural adjustment programs? Why are heavily financed social systems still being challenged in Europe where shifts have already been implemented as in Agenda 2010 and the Reform of the Welfare State? Are there spaces being opened if we explore an economic model that is "green"? The discussion was on building a modernizing economic framework that will create

cross-cutting solutions for social and environmental problems. It attempts to balance urgent practical needs of jobs, food to long-term sustainability issues of security and conservation.

The social market economy is one in which social concerns are accorded the same importance as economic concerns. Faced with contemporary environmental challenges, the social market economy must of necessity become an ecologically oriented economy. But the ecological orientation should not dilute the traditional social market economy “brand”. The ecological ingredients of the social and ecological market economy are as important as its market elements and social characteristics. However, if the market does not work and if economic policy is not combined with preventive and compensatory social policy, the ecological dimension cannot be effectively incorporated into a social market economy. So, the terms market, social, and ecological should chime with each other as equally essential elements in a melodious triad.

The government must clearly espouse the Social and Ecological Economic Model, expressing its commitment to prosperity, social justice, and ecological protection, while recognizing its own intervention limits. The state’s active economic role refers,

above all, to the production of public goods like health service, education, public transport, infrastructure. As the citizens must behave in accordance with the system, the state, too, in the form of government organizations and the public service at the national and regional levels, must respect the Social and Ecological Economic Model rules established and sanctioned by majority decision.

Sustainability is a long run, people-centered concept. There have been many attempts to define sustainability, but most are rooted in the general concept of inter-generational equity. Social and ecological sustainable development means meeting the needs and wants of people of the current generation while leaving equal or better opportunities for people of generations to follow. What is to be sustained? -- development of resources: natural, human, and economic. What is the purpose of development? -- positive change or human progress, not necessarily growth in numbers or size. Who is to benefit from such development? -- people of the current generation and of generations to follow. For how many generations is development to be sustained? -- for all future generations, forever. Thus, sustainability is about sustaining a desirable quality of life for people, forever.

## Toward Economy with Social-ecological Dimensions:

# ASIA HAS TO TAKE LEAD<sup>1</sup>

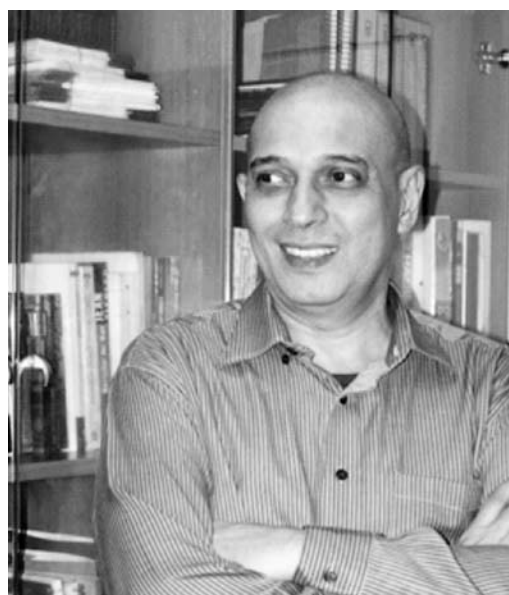
IVAN A. HADAR<sup>2</sup>

### The Calls

During the World Economic Forum in Davos, last January, UN Secretary-general Ban Ki-moon has called for “Revolutionary Action” to achieve sustainable development and warned at the same time that “the past century’s heedless consumption of resources is a global suicide pact with time running out to ensure an economic model for survival”.<sup>3</sup>

At the same forum, the European Union (EU) has called on member states to double investment in renewable energy to reach the target of having 20 percent of the region’s energy come from renewable sources by 2020. Currently only three states -- Germany, Hungary and Sweden -- have met their 2010 interim goals for renewable energy for both electricity and transport, according to the regional bloc.<sup>4</sup>

Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has also declared that his gov-



ernment is committed to policies that balance growth and environmental protection. Echoing the words of the UN Secretary-general, he said: “We should not make a contradiction between growth and the need to protect the environment.” Economic growth has to be “inclusive” so that it benefits all sectors of the population.<sup>5</sup>

In his 2011 State of the Union address, U.S. President Barack Obama laid out also an agenda for investment, innovation, jobs

1 Presented in Conference of Asian SocDem in Ulaanbataar, 1-2 July 2011

2 Editor Journal SocDem Indonesia/Asia

3 UN News Centre, January 28, 20011

4 European Commission, January 2011

5 Media Indonesia, January 24, 2011

and American competitiveness, planning an ambitious proposal to transform the nation's energy infrastructure away from the technologies used for more than 100 years -- inefficient and polluting coal-fired power plants -- toward new, clean energy sources.<sup>6</sup>

More concrete coming from The Republic of Korea (South Korea), which recently initiated a Green Growth Plan, worth 852 million U.S. dollars, building a network of bicycle paths stretching over 3,100 kilometers throughout the country, giving the technologically thriving area a "competitive advantage".<sup>7</sup>

However, all the calls, plans and small concrete steps are not enough. Then the only way climate change can be securely addressed is by bringing together the pillars of sustainable development, namely economic growth, environmental issues and social concerns in one common framework. "Not only should emissions be reduced by 50 percent, it should also be done in an equitable fashion, and allowing prosperity at the same time," Ban Ki-moon said.<sup>8</sup>

### The Tension

Too often in recent decades, the two big "e" words -- ecology and economy -- have been used as though they represented opposing concerns. Today, when we think of ecology, the household in question is the biosphere, primarily the natural environment. When we think of the economy, we think of the human production, exchange, and consumption of goods and services. The two topics are treated in such a way that they hardly touch each other. And there

is the problem. We need a healthy natural environment as a context for our lives. We need to produce, exchange, and consume goods and services. But precisely because we need both, preoccupation with either one, when the other is not in view, can be disastrous.<sup>9</sup>

Realistically, in the past half century at least, attention has been overwhelmingly focused on economy. The arguments have been about how to increase production, exchange, and consumption of goods and services. Some economists argued that a centralized bureaucracy could plan economic growth most effectively. Others asserted that a market free from government interference would grow more rapidly. Most economies have in fact had elements of both, but on the whole giving more freedom to entrepreneurs has proved more effective.

This debate among economists has in general presupposed that natural resources are not limited. In the West, the dominant school of neo-liberal economists is often quite explicit about this. It believes that technological advance will handle any problems that arise from natural shortages. There are no limits to growth. The more rapidly we increase production, exchange, and consumption the better. Since larger markets speed economic growth, the ideal is a single global market. We need not deal with environmental problems in terms of public policy, since the market will take care of them. For example, as petroleum becomes expensive, other sources of energy, which are now more costly, will become competitive. Then they will be widely used.<sup>10</sup>

Those who look at the world ecologi-

6 [www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2011](http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2011)

7 The Associated Press; September 22, 2009

8 UN News Centre, January 28, 2011

9 John B. Cobb, Jr, 2002

10 Articlesbase, September 19, 2010

cally see things quite differently. Air, water, and soil are being poisoned. The heating of the atmosphere leads to increased storms and more erratic weather. Those who see things this way urge that, at a minimum, we should focus on conservation of scarce resources, reduction of pollution, and technological innovations that will enable us to adjust to a post-petroleum economy.

So far, the economists are victorious. All societies make some concessions to the ecologists, but only when these are not too costly in economic terms. Economic growth is the organizing principle of society. The educational system is in its service. We judge governments primarily in terms of how rapidly nations grow under their policies.

Despite this, ecologists are sure that, at a more fundamental level, economists are wrong. They point out the high social and ecological costs of past technological solutions to the production of food, such as the Green Revolution, and the unsustainability of its practices as oil becomes scarce. The proposed technological solution through genetic manipulation will solve some problems at the expense of generating others. The whole system becomes more and more precarious. Meanwhile aquifers are exhausted and rivers run dry.<sup>11</sup>

The technological solution of desalinization of ocean water and pumping it to the fields is so expensive in energy that its relevance is minimal. Creating plants that can survive with reduced water goes in just the opposite direction from the green revolution. A new mindset is needed, one that locates food production in the wider ecological and social context and involves consideration of how the affluent can reduce their demands

for food. Encouragement of reducing consumption cuts directly against the economist's interest in endless growth.<sup>12</sup>

Actually there is a third important voice in the contemporary debate. This is the voice that speaks for fairness. The community has no value in neo-liberal economic thinking. The empirical and historical fact is that the market favors the rich over the poor and tends to concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

Of course, without the high level of national production, the wealth would not have been available to distribute. But it is disingenuous to describe the market as the agent of a fair distribution. Although economists dispute this, the evidence is that the market left to itself does very little for the poor. We all know, that left to itself the market worsens the condition of the poor.

We all know now, economy and ecology cannot be separated. Ecological fallout from economic development is in no way an "externality" as the economic jargon has it; it is a positive depletion of real wealth, of human and natural capital.

It is time to look seriously at the full implications of this. We need to start by recognizing that social collapse is a real possibility. When we speak about environmental crisis, we are not to think only of spiraling poverty and mortality, but about brutal and uncontainable conflict. An economics that ignores environmental degradation invites social degradation -- in plain terms, violence.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Imperative**

To change the mindset, in an academic perspective the shift from the 'Keynesian

---

11 Rowan Williams, 2005

12 John B. Cobb, Jr, 2002

13 John B. Cobb, Jr, 2002



welfare state' to the 'Schumpeterian welfare state', will put the future focus of social and economic policies will lie on the promotion of meaningful social and environmental innovations. The wise coordination of innovation, technology and education policies plays are key factors in creating good living and working conditions for future societies, especially for an emerging economy like Asia.

An example from Indonesia: This country is currently facing a twin challenge regarding the sustainability of its economy. It is the third largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the world<sup>1</sup> and a country with an unemployment rate of 7.4 percent in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Should Indonesia's economic growth improve in the future, it is likely that it is going to be conducted at the cost of environmental sustainability.<sup>14</sup>

With 9.4 million hectares of palm oil plantations, Indonesia is one of the leading countries in the production of palm oil products. The world demand for palm oil products is rising driven by demands for edible oils, cosmetics and biofuels. Indonesia currently has 9.4 million hectares of palm oil plantations. Indonesia currently leads the world's palm oil production with 22,090,000 metric tons, followed by Malaysia with 18,200,000 metric tons.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the production of palm oil is closely associated with conflicts, and greenhouse gas emissions from forest clearance. Therefore, the challenge for determining the mitigation value of palm oil needs to be conducted through the whole of its lifecycle, comparing emissions before and after palm oil plantations.<sup>15</sup>

### **How about China, India, Asia as a whole?**

It will take decades to accept that the axis of global economy has shifted to Asia.

The current global recession [or is it a deep depression] is being attempted to be cured by the conservatives and liberals in the USA and Europe in their own old-fashioned ways.

Allow the markets to recover with a gentle nudge from government, say the conservatives, while the liberals want strong government intervention of a Keynesian type. Obama says these differences are no more important — it is more about the effectiveness of the government rather than size. This is dialogue without substance.

In the midst of all this gloom, a news report says that China has become the third-largest global economy, pushing Germany aside. Also, India and China are still expecting to grow at more than 6% this fiscal and may continue in the same way the next fiscal when the developed economies are struggling between negative growth and marginally positive numbers.<sup>16</sup>

But this won't be linear transformation. In the known human history, this is the first time that Asia (especially, China and India, Japan, South Korea, ASEAN) are going to gain dominance in the economic affairs of the world. However it's an imperative for Asia to take lead in the new paradigm.

At the heart of the international concern is the discussion of rich and poor nations who should step up first and who should pay for a change in the energy menu. Historically the responsibility lies with the rich countries. However, the current growth of emissions mostly takes place in developing countries. But these nations are still in

14 Kleden & Kauppert, 2011

15 Kleden & Kauppert, 2011

16 The New York Times, August 15, 2010

a much poorer situation, so that the world must be given them the possibility to grow further until a certain point.

We have to return constantly to what sort of structures and sanctions might assist in making effective a change in our motivations and myths. We could imagine, for instance, a “charter” of rights in relation to the environment -- that we should be able to live in a world that still had wilderness spaces, that still nurtured a balanced variety of species, that allowed us access to unpoisoned natural foodstuffs.

It may be that the time is ripe for an attempt at a comprehensive statement of this, a new United Nations commitment - a “Charter of Rights to Natural Capital” to which governments could sign up and by which their own practice and that of the nations in whose economies they invested could be measured.<sup>17</sup>

A manageable first step relating particularly to carbon emissions, supported by a wide coalition of concerned parties, is of course the “contraction and convergence”<sup>18</sup> proposals initially developed by the Global Commons Institute in London. This involves granting to each nation a notional “entitlement to pollute” up to an agreed level that is credibly compatible with overall goals for managing and limiting atmospheric pollution. Those nations that exceed this level would have to pay pro rata charges on their excess emissions. The money thus raised would be put at the service of low-emission nations or could presumably be plowed back into poor but high-emission nations

-- who would be, so to speak, in credit as to their entitlements, so as to assist them in ecologically sustainable development.<sup>19</sup>

## LITERATURE, WEBSITES

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/>

<http://ec.europa.eu/>

The Associated Press; September 22, 2009, *South Korean President pushes Green Growth,*

Articlesbase, September 19, 2010, *Effect of Economic to Ecology*

Paskal Kleden & Philipp Kauppert, *An Assessment in Supporting Green Jobs in Indonesia*, FES 2011

Archbishop calls for action on environment to head off social crisis - *Ecology and Economy*, March 8, 2005

[www.global-greenhouse-warming.com/contraction-and-convergence](http://www.global-greenhouse-warming.com/contraction-and-convergence)

Amanda Briney, *History and Overview of the Green Revolution*, May 5, 2010

Rowan Williams, *Ecology and the economy go hand in hand*, Seattlepi.Com, April 23, 2005

John B. Cobb, Jr, *Ecology and Economy*, Shanghai 2002

---

17 Ecology and Economy - Archbishop calls for action on environment to head off social crisis

18 Contraction and Convergence is the framework for Greenhouse gas control proposed to the UNFCCC since the early 1990's by GCI.

---

19 Global Greenhouse Warming.Com

# Redeeming Ideology

By Steven Sim



Today we take freedom for granted. I do not mean we have a lot more freedom and are not being appreciative. Rather, it is a very popular thing to “fight for freedom”; everyone is advocating freedom and demanding freedom. It seems that in the modern democratic society such as ours, one can do no wrong advocating freedom. Or can one?

The problem with the current trend of talking about freedom is that we usually discuss the concept detached from the framework of ideology. If previously, freedom and rights were discussed against ideological backdrops, today with the distaste of ideology, freedom is being uprooted

from its philosophical and political context. To want freedom without ideology is like wanting to be clean without taking a bath. It is like wanting to be fit without exercise or to have a baby without sex. To talk about freedom and to want freedom without first asking the difficult questions about what it means is mere rhetoric.

Freedom is not a neutral word and we should not take for granted that it means the same thing to everyone. Political discourse on freedom, therefore, must be more nuanced than simply stating a general desire for freedom. Further questions must eventually be asked; freedom for whom and from whom? And can we quantify freedom

to say how much freedom is freedom? In the complex world of human relationships, how do we negotiate our freedom against the freedom of the others? Should the market, a collective entity which is at the same time real and abstract, be granted freedom similar to freedom granted to an individual person?

The answers to these questions depend very much on the values of the one who answers them, in other words, the person's ideology.

Thus, by denying ideology and refusing to deal with ideology, we not only create a vacuum for confusion but also the opportunity to set up an oppressive state. Rejecting ideology does not mean it will go away. Instead, the ideological vacuum will be filled by, yes, ideology. In other words, we reject ideology only to be deeply submerged in ideology.

The effect of the abandonment of ideology is like what Nietzsche described in his parable of the madman. In the parable, god represented the overarching metanarrative of the Western civilisation – its ideology. Nietzsche's protagonist, the madman, announced the "death of god" and proceeded to paint a vivid picture of an anarchic, confused and disoriented state of affairs:

*"Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving now? Where are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually*

*closing in on us?"*

We must understand that the lack of ideology is not just an empty space, but a downward spiral and slippery slope where anything goes, where any competing ideologies can apply. To return to our discussion on wanting freedom without ideology, it is like wanting a baby without sex. Even if you do not want to do it – the sex – someone else will have to do for you if you want a baby. It is naive to think we can skip the process and still achieve the result.

The danger of the indiscriminate rejection of ideology is clearly recorded for us in modern history. In early twentieth century China, ideological vacuum left by the fall of its 2,000-year-old monarchy was filled by warlords who would rule over a divided China for more than a decade before the rise of the communist party. In Europe, the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of imperial Germany was filled by Adolf Hitler and his fascist philosophy. The fall of the Iron Curtain in the late eighties and along with it, the discredit of twentieth century communism, created an ideological vacuum which was eventually occupied by unfettered global capitalism, a major cause of the financial crises we are facing today. "Politics hates a vacuum," said the award-winning bestselling author Naomi Klein, "If it isn't filled with hope, someone will fill it with fear."

Sadly, today, like sex, ideology has become a bad word to many. This is because we are living in a world where the belief prevails that neutrality is not only possible, but a virtue. Yet it is precisely by our surrendering of ideology that the powers that be are able to convince the people to leave the details to them. The problem is, ideology is here to stay, whether we acknowledge it or not. And when we refuse to deal with the

details, we risk not only failing to achieve our goal, but more tragically, we may end up in an oppressive state.

In the case of freedom, today more and more people are talking about it, but in one sense, we are much more restricted compared to before. Of course our restriction may no longer be caused by a superstructure, an authoritarian patriarchal state or a societal superego. The loss our freedom is much more subtle, so subtle that like the frog boiled in slow temperature, we may not notice it, and worse, we may actually begin to enjoy the slow process of simmering to death.

Take for example how we rejected parental figures but are regulated by a strict diet programme to “finish up our greens”. We rejected all sorts of authorities but are bound by a regiment of exercise and health supplements. We rejected objective morality but subject ourselves to every kind of political correctness so as to not offend anyone. And finally, we rejected legitimate government regulation only to be confronted by inequality due to the fact that some of us are freer than others, or have more power, more wealth or a better head start. The paradox of freedom is thus; when everyone is said to be equally free, we will be confronted with

the problem of who is really free? All of us act within an ideological framework, whether we realised it or not. The question is not how do we avoid it, but how do we critically evaluate the ideological choices offered to us, especially in politics, to achieve the best course of action possible.

The future of politics lies in the people having adequate understanding about ideology and political values - the fine print, if you like - not some fuzzy concepts of freedom and democracy, in order to decide for themselves what the best form of governance is. If we leave the matters of freedom and rights to the politicians, then we risk getting nothing in the end, or worse, getting the exact opposite. These concepts, we must always remember, do not occur in ideological vacuum. Read the label and watch out for the fine print, mothers used to say, because the devil is in the details. I think it is time we start listening to good advice once again.

Steven Sim is a local government councillor of Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley Municipal Council), the largest municipality in Malaysia. He was formerly the secretariat of SOCDEM Asia. This article is taken from a chapter in his upcoming book “The Audacity to Think”.

# Dismantling Corruption Sustaining the Momentum

Speech for the 14<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of  
AKBAYAN Citizens Action Party  
23 January 2012, Pugad Lawin Hall,  
Quezon City Sports Club, Quezon City

delivered by Arlene Bag-ao,  
a member of the House of Representatives  
- AKBAYAN Party



*(**Editor's Note:** In recent years, AKBAYAN has emerged as one of the most successful democratic Left parties in the Philippines. With its two representatives in the legislature and several appointees in the bureaucracy (including one Cabinet member), AKBAYAN has initiated several campaigns designed to promote greater transparency in government and exact accountability from the former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who has been charged with several cases of corruption and election sabotage.*

*Recently, the party (along with its allies in the ruling coalition) has called for the ouster of Arroyo-appointee Supreme Court Chief Magistrate Renato Corona. The charges*

# Arroyo, Momentum of Change

*include exhibiting favor and leniency towards former President Arroyo, as well as failing to disclose to the public his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SLAN). During the impeachment trial, the prosecutors were able to reveal that Corona has approximately Php39.1 million (\$978,000.00)*

*deposited in PS Bank—an amount which is way below the Php9.1 million indicated in his SLAN. In addition, Corona has yet to explain how he was able to acquire several houses amounting to millions of pesos with a modest salary of Php46,200.00 (\$1,155.00).*

*Such disparities have prompted AKBAYAN Representative to file a forfeiture case against the Chief Justice. Another AKBAYAN Representative, Arlene Bag-ao, has also taken an important role in the ongoing impeachment trial since she is one of the legislative prosecutors against Corona. The speech below was delivered by Representative Bag-ao during AKBAYAN's 14TH Year Anniversary celebration and offers some of her reflections on the still ongoing impeachment case.)*





I welcome this invitation to speak before you today as a refreshing break from the intense preparation sessions of our team of lawyers for the prosecution of Articles 3 and 4 of the Articles of Impeachment. To be quite honest about it, I feel a bit of the nerves due to the immensity of the challenge before me, as well as the high expectations that our people have from the prosecutors in the impeachment trial of Chief Justice Renato Corona. But since I do not see the now-familiar faces of the Defense Panel—former Justice Serafin Cuevas, my former teacher Atty. Jack Jimenez in the hall, I do not expect to be interrupted by any objection, technical or otherwise.

The year 2011 will be remembered as the year of reckoning against the corrupt past of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA). *Nine years of exacting accountability from Arroyo's acts of plunder and corruption.*

We began the year 2011 with a full-court press to dismantle the first line of

defense cleverly and maliciously put in place by former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, by impeaching her appointed Ombudsman Merceditas “Merci” Gutierrez.<sup>1</sup> Merci and her cabal single-handedly frustrated all attempts to make GMA accountable for the various graft and corruption charges against her. It took almost half a year, thanks to the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) issued by the Supreme Court, for us in the House of Representatives to overwhelmingly impeach her.

Without us firing a single shot in the halls of the Senate, Ombudsman Merce-

---

1 Merceditas Gutierrez, who is believed to be a close friend of the Arroyo family, was appointed as Ombudsman on December 1, 2005. A numerous street protests demanding her ouster, Gutierrez was finally impeached by the House of Representatives (the Lower House of the Philippine legislature) on March 22, 2011. But before the Senate can even begin its impeachment trial, Gutierrez resigned from her post a month later on April 29.



ditas Gutierrez succumbed to the tremendous pressure both from the public and from the strength of the Articles of Impeachment against her. Thus, GMA's first line of defense crumbled. And because of this historic victory in our mission to make GMA accountable for her crimes against the Filipino people, she is now facing charges for the anomalies that she and her administration committed. These are just the first gains that we are reaping from Merci's impeachment. More are still to come.

At this point let me share to you a personal anecdote, one that is close to AKBAYAN's heart. When the Articles of Impeachment against Ombudsman Meceditas were being drafted, one article was considered by many as the weakest—the case of Ensign Phillip Pestaño.<sup>2</sup> In fact, nobody was willing to prosecute the article except for the AKBAYAN team who insisted on its inclusion. We prepared long and hard to prosecute it in the Senate trial but because of Merci's resignation, we were denied the opportunity to prove its relevance to the impeachment case. The recent filing of murder charges against the 10 suspects in the murder of Ensign Philip Pestaño by the Office of the Ombudsman led by Conchita Carpio-Morales is a vindication, not only for us in AKBAYAN but more importantly for his

parents, Ka Pepe and Tita Nene and Philip's siblings and friends. After more than a decade and a half of constant and unwavering push to make the wheels of justice turn, they will have their day in court and the first step towards achieving justice has been taken.

AKBAYAN's critical role in the impeachment of Ombudsman Meceditas Gutierrez cannot be denied. Risa Hontiveros, together with Gen. Danny Lim and Ka Pepe and Nene Pestaño filed the impeachment complaint. Rep. Walden Bello and myself endorsed the complaint and successfully advocated for it in the House Committee on Justice. AKBAYAN, likewise, took the leadership in the public campaign for Merci's ouster together with our allies in the Oust Merci Gutierrez Movement (OMG).

With all candor and humility, I claim with pride that we, in AKBAYAN, were in the frontlines of that battle against the corrupt and inept pawn of GMA and we prevailed.

We have won a battle, we still have a war to win. The next battle has begun and AKBAYAN's banner is still waving in the frontlines. In this battle, we stand face-to-face with GMA's last line of defense, the strongest, brightest and the most loyal among her generals, GMA's former Chief-of-Staff and now her acting "Secretary of Defense": Chief Justice Renato Corona.

Much as I want to share with you my thoughts on the merits of the Articles of Impeachment against Chief Justice Renato Corona, I am gagged. Let me instead share with you my thoughts and reflections on the impeachment of the Chief Justice without dealing and arguing on the merits.

Last January 16 in the morning, a few hours before the impeachment trial in the Senate began, Chief Justice Corona delivered a fiery speech commenting on various

---

2 Philip Pestaño is a Navy ensign who was found dead inside his ship cabin on September 27, 1995. Navy officials dismissed the incident as homicide; but Pestaño's family insists that he was murdered, alleging that the ensign discovered that the cargo being loaded onto his vessel included illegally cut logs, several sacks of shabu and weapons which were to be sold to the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. The Pestaño family filed one of several impeachment complaints against Gutierrez after her office decided to dismiss the murder charges filed against several Navy officials.

points of the Articles of Impeachment and even discussed at length each of the 45 land titles listed and released by the Land Registration Authority. He admitted owning some and denied the others. I was taken aback when he enumerated each of the points despite the gag order against him.

To be honest, I was pleasantly surprised by his show of resolve to argue his own case that I thought he was willing to testify on his own behalf. But this was proven wrong, when his defense objected to the prosecution's request for the issuance of subpoena for the Chief Justice and his family to testify before the Impeachment Court. Their objection was sustained. I am tempted to present arguments against the ruling here but I am constrained.

But if the Chief Justice is really serious about defending himself and personally challenge the accusations against him, I challenge him to take the witness stand when the turn of the defense to present evidence comes. It will give him the opportunity to do what he is doing outside the Impeachment Court—rebutting the pieces of evidence and testimony one by one. The witness stand will also give him a bonus. It will also give him the pleasure and opportunity to personally show how inept and inexperienced we, in the prosecution, are.

### **Let me go to another highlight of his defiant January 16 speech.**

In his January 16 speech, Chief Justice Renato Corona bared what is now called “The Conspiracy of 3”. He said it is a conspiracy of three persons: one wants to prevent the distribution of Hacienda Luisita,<sup>3</sup> the other

one is in a hurry to become vice-president but lost in the election and finally the third, has the ambition to become Chief Justice.

CJ Corona is right. He is right about the existence of a conspiracy but he got his numbers wrongs. It is not a conspiracy of three, neither is it a conspiracy of 188.<sup>4</sup> I daresay it is a “Conspiracy of Millions”—a conspiracy of Filipinos conspiring to remove him from the post which he abused.

It is not a conspiracy to force the Supreme Court to its knees and follow the will of a dictatorship but rather a conspiracy of millions of people who are desperate to restore the independence of the Supreme Court and free it from any undue influence. It is a conspiracy of Filipinos who are reclaiming the Supreme Court from the clasp of the claws of Corona's sovereign, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. This is a conspiracy of the Filipino people intent on reclaiming the Supreme Court from the Coronarroyo Conspiracy.

Chief Justice Corona claims that his impeachment is all about Hacienda Luisita. Perhaps, Chief Justice Corona has forgotten that we in AKBAYAN have been working with the farmworkers of Hacienda Luisita and the Department of Agrarian Reform precisely to make its distribution a reality. Perhaps the Chief Justice does not know that among the ranks of the private prosecutors in his impeachment trials are several lawyers of the Hacienda Luisita farmers and farmworkers. In trying to sell his theory, the Chief Justice has conveniently forgotten that the Hacienda Luisita case was argued and won by the farmers together with the Department of Agrarian Reform.

---

3 Hacienda Luisita is a 6,435-hectare sugar plantation estate located in the province of Tarlac, and owned by the family of the current President, Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III.

---

4 The number 188 refers to the 188 representatives who voted for Corona's impeachment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in my experience all trials can become dull and boring with very few dramatic and explosive moments that are too far in between. In the absence of drama and explosive action, it is very easy to lose focus on the reasons why there is an impeachment trial. In this age of reality shows, I cannot blame the public watching the impeachment trial live on national television to shift their focus and take notice of the different realities happening in the Senate floor. In the eyes of the very critical public, it is not only the accused, the impeached Chief Justice who is on trial, but the prosecutors and the senator-judges, as well.

In the first week of the impeachment trial, the contrast between the defense team, composed mainly of high-caliber and experienced veteran litigation lawyers, and the prosecution team composed mainly of politicians who have spent most of their time in elective public offices and outside the courtroom gained the attention of the public. We, in the prosecution, became objects of criticism and the harsh Filipino sense of humor especially in cyberspace. I shall offer neither denials nor explanations.

I admit, that in terms of litigation experience, we in the prosecution, especially the public prosecutors are the underdog. In fact most of us in the prosecution team were once students of those in the defense panel. In that respect alone we are oceans apart. Moreover, prosecuting a case with millions of viewers watching your every

move and listening to every word you utter is really intimidating.

The defense panel is indeed a Dream Team and their strength lie in their more than 300 years of combined litigation experience.

However, no amount of trial experience can compensate for the defense's greatest disadvantage: their client Chief Justice Corona.

Dear friends and comrades, this battle must not only be fought by the prosecutors in the Impeachment Court. The battlefield is not just the plenary hall of the Senate where we have to win hearts and minds of the senator-judges. We also have to wage battle in the public sphere to win the hearts and minds of the people. We need your help in breaking the barriers of legalese and technicalities in the Senate floor and help ordinary people understand the proceedings.

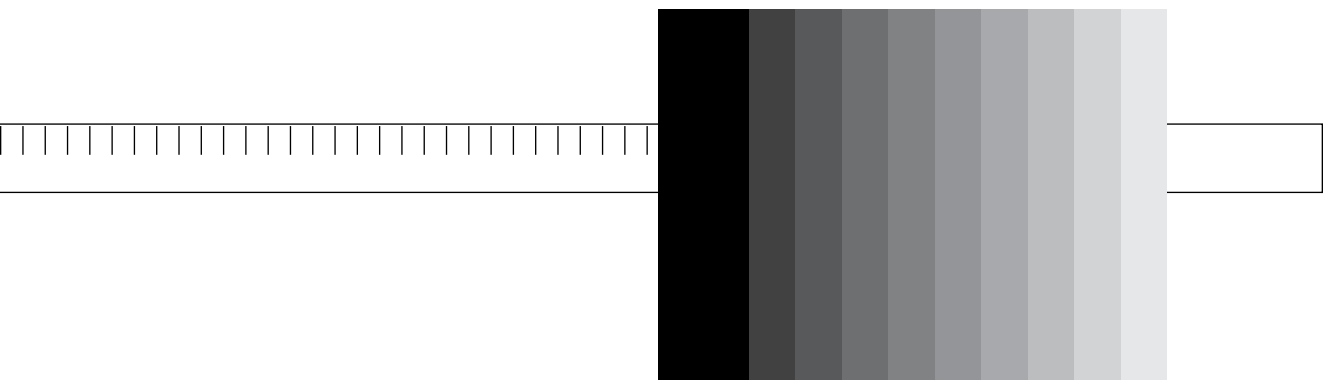
The impeachment process is but a battle that we need to wage to win the war against corruption. For us in AKBAYAN, our mission goes way beyond this. The present conjuncture provides us with a fertile and favorable political environment to push for the changes that we have been fighting for.

A wave of change is coming. Those who cling to the ways of the past and of the GMA administration, be forewarned. Do not stand in the way.

*Kapag AKBAYAN ang Lumaban, Panalo ang Mamamayan.* (When AKBAYAN fights, the people wins.)

# Towards **left of centre**

By Liew Chin Tong\*)



The ultimate and only game plan of Barisan Nasional (BN) is to destroy the alternative, Pakatan Rakyat. Without a viable alternative, BN will be perpetually in power. But the moment there is a credible alternative, no one can rule out the possibility of a change of government.

BN is attempting three very different acts at the same time: to put Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim behind bars in the hope of finishing off Pakatan Rakyat and Parti Keadilan Rakyat; to get PAS to form a unity government with BN; demonize DAP on one hand and yet on the other hand, strangely enough, hoping that DAP will join BN.

BN strategists are an increasingly con-

fused lot. They have alternately accused the DAP of being the spokesman for Chinese, Christians, or chauvinists, in an attempt to stoke Malay hatred against the DAP and turn the Malays against Pakatan Rakyat.

Since Umno's July 2005 General Assembly, the party continues to move further away from the centre and is taking extreme positions.

In the 14 years between Mahathir's 1991 announcement of Vision 2020 and the July 2005 General Assembly when it resurrected the New Economic Policy, Umno's gentle stand towards non-Malays won it much support in the 1995, 1999 and 2004 General Elections.

Post-2005 Umno and its mouthpieces Utusan Malaysia and Perkasa have already given up winning over non-Malays, especially after the March 8, 2008 general election.

But playing the racial card may not win Umno too many votes. BN's most successful election performances in 1995 and 2004 were not riding on the back of increased Malay votes, but were attributed to its successful portrayal of opposition parties as extremists, while portraying Umno as centrists in a race-based political universe.

While claiming that it defends the Malays, Umno has been powerless to solve the problems plaguing the Malays including corruption, poverty and inflation.

The most important issue in the next general election is whether non-Malays can accept PAS, and whether Malays and Bumiputeras can embrace DAP.

DAP's political stand has always been to speak up for all Malaysians. In the history of the party, DAP not only has elected representatives from three major races, it also is the party with the highest number of Indian elected representatives in this Parliamentary session.

Admittedly, there was a time when the party's supporters mainly comprised Chinese, and many party events seemed to have a more Chinese flavor.

Our next challenge is how to broaden the DAP's national appeal and reach out to all races with the DAP's message.

Lim Guan Eng's launch of the Malay-language website Rokatini.com was premised on this purpose. It is hoped that this website will attract more young, urban Malays and readers of the Malay language from all races to create a new political culture and build a common political ground.

The economic reality of contemporary Malaysia requires Pakatan Rakyat and the DAP to take a left turn as far as our economic vision is concerned. Equality and solidarity should be placed at the forefront of the economic discourse.

The Singaporean electoral upset and the uprising in the Middle East since early this year share three common factors, namely inequality, inflation and the Facebook generation.

It is not that there was no growth in Singapore or Egypt. Far from it. In fact Singapore experienced a record 14.5 per cent growth in its GDP in 2010 while Egypt and Tunisia had a growth rate that averaged 5

per cent.

It is fair to establish that growth alone is not sufficient to generate social cohesiveness. Failure to address issues concerning distribution and equal access to opportunities literally brought down these governments.

In short, it is inequality that fuelled anti-establishment anger. A system that privileges a small group of well-heeled elite over the others is tolerated either because growth spilled over sufficiently to keep everyone happy or the prevailing oppressive nature of the regime kept the people in fear most of the time.

But the spike in global inflation since the global financial crisis in 2008 is felt more keenly in societies that are hugely unequal economically than those that are more equal. The poor and the middle-class saw their living standards fall rapidly as inflation rose.

And the presence of the Facebook generation tilted the balance as the state is no longer able to monopolies the spread of news and communication channels to organize mass civil disobedient actions.

The lessons that all governments need to learn are these: that investors, either foreign or local, are not voters; tourists are not voters and real estate developers are not voters either. Economic growth alone without fairer distribution of the fruits of growth is not politically sustainable.

Our economic agenda needs to prioritize jobs and wages in our discourse. It is pointless if we have a huge influx of investments without generating decent jobs for the locals.

While checking inflation sounds noble, it is almost impossible to curb it especially as the latest wave of inflation is to a large extent a result of rising wages for workers in

the eastern seaboard of China.

It is time for us to re-look at Malaysia's low-wage policy, set a minimum wage, and also put a stop to the massive influx of unskilled foreign labour. We must end the vicious cycle of low wage, low skill and low productivity.

Beyond jobs and wages, we need a paradigm shift in housing, public transport, healthcare and sustainability.

While the private sector can remain a player in these sectors, the public sector must play an active role to ensure that private speculation and profiteering would not result in the majority not having a roof over their heads, those who do not own a car become immobile, and those who can't afford healthcare suffer or die miserably. And, our environment is not to be compromised either.

Hence, a "left turn" in our approach to the economy is required in order to ensure that all Malaysians regardless of race and ethnicity live a decent life with equal opportunity in the face of global inflation.

Malaysia is at a crossroad in which a change of the federal government in the next general election is no longer deemed impossible.

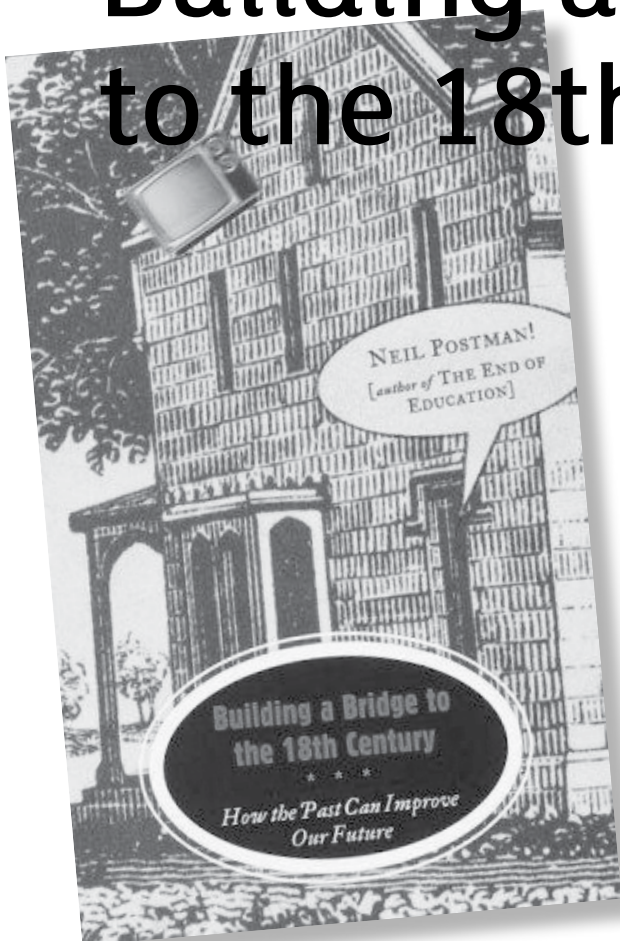
But for that change to happen, PAS and DAP must both win across the ethnic divide while Pakatan Rakyat needs to provide a new and creative economic alternative premised on left-of-centre ideas of equality and solidarity.

\*) Liew Chin Tong  
Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera,  
Malaysia  
International Secretary, DAP

# Narrating the Future

An Examination of **Neil Postman's**

## Building a Bridge to the 18th Century



By: Francis Isaac



One morning, while I was on my way to work, I saw a large billboard that was apparently set up by a group of fundamentalist Christians. Written in bright, bold letters, the tarpaulin warned commuters of the approaching Apocalypse on May 21, 2011 and called on the public to turn back to God before it is too late.

Amused by the boldness of its assertion,

I dismissed the statement as utter nonsense and went on my way; though I had the gnawing feeling that the people behind the said banner had complete faith in the truthfulness of their message.

This minor incident, to my mind, reflects the various ideas that we have on how the world will exactly end. Evangelicals, for instance, believe that we are already living in the End of Days; while scientists, on the other hand, maintain that the Earth will be around for another five (5) billion years, until the Sun finally dies out as a frightening

*red dwarf*.

Such apparent lack of consensus, however, is hardly surprising, since our vision of the future is greatly influenced by our own frameworks and belief systems. This was, in fact, pointed out by American academic Neil Postman in his last major work *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century*.

First released in 1999, the book begins with the controversial proposition that the “future is an illusion;” not because time does not exist, but because the “future (that) we see is only—and can only be—a projection of the past” (p. 5). Hence, the future (for Postman) is made and not divined, since it would have to be painstakingly built by the current generation using all the moral and intellectual resources that it has at its disposal.

This, however, places a terrible responsibility on us who are living in the present, for we are now compelled to search for “useful and humane ideas (from our past) with which to fill the future” (p. 13).

It is probably this sense of obligation that has prompted Postman to condemn his fellow intellectuals who have “fallen under the devilish spell of...postmodernism” (p. 8). Utilizing a set of arguments that sometimes borders on the ad hominem, the author accuses the purveyors of this social theory as “people in the thrall of a serious depression” and equates them with “alien and devil-believers” (p. 8) for allegedly offering ridiculous ideas.

But this begs the question: *How are we to understand the term postmodernism that the author so vehemently repudiates?*

In a chapter laconically entitled “Language”, Postman describes postmodernism as an intellectual movement that “calls into question some of the more significant ‘modern’ assumptions about the world and

how we codify it”—ideas which (according to the writer) have been inherited from the Enlightenment (p. 69). This, Postman argues, has a particular significance for language since it is now “under deep suspicion and is even thought to be delusional” since it is totally incapable of mapping out reality.

A similar idea was also proposed by fellow academic Pauline Rosenau who typified postmodernism for its “open-endedness and lack of specific definition” (1992; p. 11), whose aim is “not to formulate an alternative set of assumptions but to register the impossibility of establishing any such underpinning for knowledge” (Ibid.; p. 6).

Her statements, however, imply that postmodernism actually has repercussions that extend beyond the realm of linguistics; which is why Fredric Jameson uses it as “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order” called *late capitalism* (1998; p. 3).

But for Postman, the implications of postmodernism is even more sinister, since its dominance in American intellectual circles actually indicate the loss of purpose and breakdown of *narrative* in the West. By narrative, the author refers to “stories that are sufficiently profound and complex to offer explanations of the origins and future of a people; stories that construct ideals, prescribe rules of conduct, specify sources of authority, and, in doing all this, provide a sense of continuity and purpose” (Postman; 2000; p. 101).

However, it is precisely this sense of purpose that is being assailed by postmodernist thought. In his book *The Postmodern Condition* for instance, French intellectual Jean-Francois Lyotard defined the post-modern “as incredulity toward metanar-



ratives.” This is then accompanied by the narrative function “losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal,” since it is now “being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements...(and) conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind” (1984; p. xxiv).

As an American writer “who fancies himself a heir of the Enlightenment” (p. 7) Postman’s critique is quite understandable. But for post-colonial societies like the Philippines, his criticisms should be taken with a grain of salt, since postmodernism has actually assisted intellectuals from the South to unmask the subjective character of certain Western episteme.

Edward Said, in fact, quickly comes to mind who (by acknowledging his debt to Michel Foucault) was able to conclude that, “ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be studied without their...configurations of power, also being studied” (1979; p. 5). Hence, for Said, “neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; (since) each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other,” as well as the power relations that they engender (Ibid.; p. xvii).

Yet, for all his unyielding criticism, Postman does have a point: *that a far better future can only be secured if we try to redeem some of the most sublime and edifying ideas from the eighteenth century*. Of course, in Postman’s reckoning, the eighteenth century roughly corresponds to the Age of the Enlightenment—the period wherein “we developed our ideas about inductive science, about religious and political freedom, about popular education, about rational commerce, and about the nation-state,” as well as the notion of prog-

ress and our modern concept of happiness (pp. 17-18).

He even gave a fairly comprehensive definition of the Enlightenment, describing it as “a philosophical movement of the eighteenth century focusing on the criticism of previously accepted doctrines and institutions from the point of view of rationalism” (p. 3). This is quite compatible with Kant’s own version of the Enlightenment as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage,” by “hav(ing) the courage to use your own reason” (p. 3).

Incidentally, this particular assertion by Neil Postman has great significance for activists in the Philippines, since our own Revolution of 1896 (and the Republic that it subsequently created) were largely animated by the Enlightenment ideals of *liberte, egalite, fraternite*. This is fairly noticeable in the writings of Emilio Jacinto who reminded his fellow revolutionists that, “all men are equal; (since) the origin of all is the same” (de los Santos; 2009; p. 174), and that “liberty is the attribute of man from the moment he is born” (Ibid.; P. 173).

He also tried to establish the proper relationship between the state and its citizens, saying that, “the object of all government is the people, and the security and welfare of the people must be the aim of all laws and acts” (ibid.; p. 177). He further develops this idea by articulating his own version of *the social contract*, attesting that

*the power of the ruler was not given to him by nature, and that as a man he is on the same level as the rest. Hence, all power, to be reasonable and genuine, must be exercised for the benefit of the people from which it emanated. (Ibid.; pp. 177-178; underscoring supplied)*

Another compatriot Apolinario Mabini also worked in the same milieu, and tried to envision the kind of government that will be established in the Philippines once the Revolution has been decisively won. Writing in the town of Rosales while hiding from his American pursuers, Mabini asserted that the future government should be a “political trinity” (1931; p. 56) wherein state power will be divided among the executive, the legislative and the judiciary within a parliamentary system. He then tried to establish the appropriate relationship among these three government branches by allocating the functions that should be given to each one of them:

*Society should have a soul— authority. This authority should have a sense of reason that guides and directs—the legislative power. A will that acts and implements—the executive power. A conscience that judges and punishes the bad—the judicial power. Those powers should be independent in the sense that none of them should infringe on the authority of the other. However, the latter two should submit to the former, as will and conscience submit to reason. The executive and judicial cannot separate themselves from the laws passed by the legislative, but the latter does not have any other judge except public opinion, or the people themselves. (Ibid.; p. 58)*

These, then, are the legacy of 1896 which we, by extension, have inherited from the Enlightenment and the men and women who made the American and French Revolutions possible. How we will use this inheritance to shape our future is entirely our own.

One thing, however, is quite certain: that the future can only be built through toil and painstaking sacrifice. For as Jose Rizal suggests in the closing chapter of his patriotic novel *Noli Me Tangere*, we must first fall in the night before we can claim the promise of the new dawn.

## References

- De los Santos, Epifanio. 2009. *The Revolutionists*. National Historical Institute: Manila.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1998. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. Verso London and New York.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1963. *On History*. Lewis White Beck, Robert Anchor and Emil Fackenheim (trans.). Macmillan Publishing Company: New York.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (trans.). University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.
- Mabini, Apolinario. 1931. *The Philippine Revolution (With Other Documents of the Period): Volume II*. National Historical Institute: Manila.
- Postman, Neil. 2000. *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*. Vintage Books: New York.
- Rizal, Jose. 2006. *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)*. Harold Augenbraum (trans.). Penguin Books: New York.
- Rosenau, Pauline. 1992. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books: New York.



# Willy Brandt

(18 December 1913-8 October 1992)

Wir wollen mehr Demokratie  
wagen. Wir wollen eine  
Gesellschaft, die mehr  
Freiheit bietet und mehr  
Mitverantwortung fordert.

We want to dare more  
democracy. We want a society  
that offers more freedom and  
calls for more responsibility.



Participants of Conference of the Network of Social Democracy in Asia:  
"Growth, Social Balance and Sustainability:  
Perspectives for Social Democratic Economic Policies in Asia",  
19 – 22 October 2010, Jakarta/INDONESIA



**FRIEDRICH  
EBERTUNG  
STIFTUNG**  
Committed to Social Democracy

Social Democracy  
in ASIA