

**Union Revitalization and
Social Movement Unionism
in the Philippines**

A Handbook

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Can Philippine unions and unionists do it?

PART ONE

UNIONISM ON THE DEFENSIVE

Today, the adverse impact of globalization has thrown unions on the defensive. Trade union movements in many parts of the world have been in decline in terms of membership, bargaining power, political power and influence, and institutional vitality. Indeed, globalization has tremendously altered the terrain where unions supposedly have the domain in ensuring that workers' rights are respected.

What are the factors contributing to union decline?

Reasons for union membership decline have been attributed to a host of factors among which are the following:

- increasing global economic competition and capital mobility
- rapid pace of technological innovations in production
- restructuring of national economies from manufacturing to services

- privatization of public services, rise of contingent employment arrangements, and
- mounting resistance of employers to unionization.



What happens with globalization?

- Globalization processes entail nation-states to be subsumed to the caprice of large multinational corporations that aggressively search for favorable destinations where capital can move massively and freely without much control.
 - Thus, the significant increase of movement of international capital by multinational companies also leads to rapid integration of production across national boundaries prompting national economies to play the game of global competition.
- To be competitive, nation-states reform their regulatory power and labor and social policies to attract foreign direct investment which is seen as a strategy to generate employment and attain growth. However, globalization as we know it produces unexpected and undesirable results which have profound economic, social and political implications.

- The impact of global competition on business has been mainly used as a convenient excuse by management to justify the implementation of workplace and production restructuring which in many cases directly affect and threaten the employment stability of workers.
- Companies employ cost-saving measures in the name of productivity and competitiveness. More often, reducing labor cost has been the primary target of these measures.
- So trade unions at present time are faced with a declining number of regular workers and an increasing number of either temporary workers or agency-hired workers. This trend is very difficult to reverse as management seldom regularizes temporary hired workers. This limits the space of trade unions to expand membership.

What has been unions' response to the changing economic environment?

Unions too have contributed to their own decline. The slow response to the changing world of work coupled with traditional approaches to union organizing naturally leads to dwindling of union membership and waning of union's sphere of influence.

The declining effort on the part of unions in adapting their organizing strategies and tactics to the challenges of globalization has undeniably contributed to the contraction in union density. Union decline is also attributed to the failure of unions to organize aggressively and include other sectors of the economy in their organizing activities, particularly, women, professional, technical and white collar workers.

What do recent studies tell us about the general state of unions in the Philippines?

As revealed by a recent U.P. SOLAIR study (Aganon, Serrano, Mercado and Certeza, 2008):

- More unions are still confined to issues and concerns within their workplace.
- Their responsibility sphere is limited to addressing the welfare needs of their immediate membership without taking into account the broader sense of extending representation for the betterment of the whole working class.
- The trade unions' potential to expand its membership beyond workplace level has not been seriously looked upon where employment arrangements are constantly changing and becoming more informal.



Union decline in the Philippines

Official statistics show a low rate of unionization in the Philippines (Table 1):

Year	Union Membership	CBA/CNA Coverage
1990	3,055,091	497,317
1995	3,586,835	363,514
2000	3,788,304	484,278
2005	1,910,000	571,176
2006	1,855,000	252,713
2007p	1,918,000	247,000
2008 (January to June)	1,927,000	249,000

p - Preliminary

Sources of data: Various issues of Current Labor Statistics, Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, and "Key Labor Statistics" <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/HTML%20FILES/keylabor.html>; <http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/HTML%20FILES/keylabor.html>

What does the trade union data tell us?

In terms of unionization rate:

- From 3.57 million in 1995, union membership for both private and public sectors went down to 63% (1.918 million) in 2007.
- This means that union membership in 2007 was only 8.89% of the 21,583,111 employed people who worked 40 hours and more during that year.

In terms of members covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) or Collective Negotiation Agreements (CNAs –usually in the public sector):

As seen in Table 1, not all union members are covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and collective negotiation agreements (CNAs).

- Data from the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES), for instance, indicate that for 2007 only about 13% of all union members were covered by CBAs and CNAs (Table 1).
- From January to June 2008, preliminary data from the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) indicate that union membership in all existing private and public sector unions totaled 1.927 million, about 12.92% of which were covered by CBAs and CNAs (Table 1).
- In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Relations revised union membership data after an inventory or “cleaning up” was made (i.e., after they removed from the list inactive unions and those with multiple registrations).
 - o This development, therefore, negates the common perception that union membership in the Philippines remains relatively constant at 11%.

Is being covered by CBAs/CNAs enough to assure union members their rights in the workplace and improve their terms and conditions of employment?

Unfortunately not all the time, because even those whose unions managed to sign collective bargaining contracts have not really succeeded in improving their work conditions. A review of 214 CBAs covering 14 industry sub-sectors shows deterioration in the ability of unions to alleviate the work conditions of members in the bargaining unit (Aganon 2007). Such finding can be readily deduced from the following indicators:

- Wage increases range from zero to P75.00
- Some unions agreed to substandard provisions for overtime rates and night differentials
- Many merely indicated what the law already provides
- Some CBAs do not provide for health care benefits

Meanwhile, there is a large mass of marginalized workers, migrants, workers in the informal sector, women, and the unemployed—people outside the reach of the trade union movement who have no means to protect their ranks from exploitation and abuse. In general, however, most unions in the Philippines do not have any links with these people, neither with the wider community nor other social movements. Many are just preoccupied with their own individual unions either because they are not aware of the advantages of working with other sectors, or because they do not know whom to link with.

Is organizing more difficult today?

Beginning in the 1990's, unions experienced difficulties in union organizing. The U.P. SOLAIR study confirmed that it is even more difficult to organize unions in the 90's compared to the 80's.

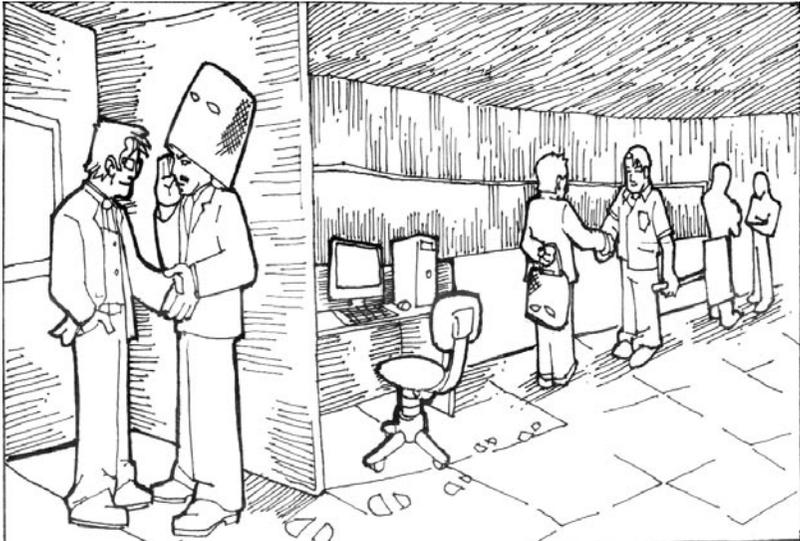
- Even at the early phase of contact building, union organizers encounter apathy among the workers themselves, as they fear to be identified by management as union sympathizers much more as key leaders and thus they might be subjected to any form of harassment by management.
- Many workers today give more weight to keeping their job than being a union member if the latter threatens their job security.

In effect, union avoidance by employers makes union organizing difficult.



What are the union avoidance tactics used by employers?

In every phase of union organization, workers meet heavy resistance from management. Starting from filing of union registration to petition for certification election, management can intervene making sure that the union will be crushed.



Use of consultants

Union avoidance tactics of the management take on many forms, foremost of which is the hiring of outside consultant who can:

- provide advice to management on how to subtly avoid unionization in the workplace and in some cases,
- provide information of persons who are available to do the “dirty job” of busting the union.

Consultants may come from government agencies, employers’ associations, local government employees and warlords, academe, individual practitioners and to some extent former trade unionists. This union busting consultancy has been at one time in fact a lucrative business in the Philippines.

Consultants usually act as extension of the company’s human resource department oftentimes in tandem with the human resources head. Together, they formulate and execute union-busting activities through innovative and unconventional ways such as: being a “persuader” of a union-free enterprise in a captive audience meeting; and re-classification of rank and file positions to supervisory and/or confidential positions to disqualify outright employees especially potential key leaders from joining the union. In addition, consultants often circumvent the provision of the labor law on right to self-organization by initiating the formation of a pseudo labor-management committee which often is conducted in non-transparent and undemocratic manner. Even the formation of workers’ cooperatives has been abused by management by appointing favored personnel as officers.

Other management tactics to dismantle formation of unions

The most glaring tactics of management to dismantle the formation of union organization range from bribing leaders, promoting them, increasing their wages and other perks and benefits, to preventive suspension, dismissals and even death threats.

Indeed, the U.P. SOLAIR study pointed to the use of consultants to teach or craft union busting programs, making changes in the personnel structure, and promoting key union leaders as the most frequent union avoidance tactics employed by management.

Effects of union avoidance tactics

These management ploys together with other means to avoid union formation are designed to weaken or totally thwart unionism at the company level.

Generally, these contribute to the difficulties experienced by the organizers in organizing unions. The difficulty varies from the tactic used.

Specific effects of union avoidance tactics

The effects of union avoidance studies as revealed by the U.P. SOLAIR study are shown in Box 1 .

Box 1. Effects Of Union Avoidance Tactics

- Organizing became very difficult
- Target union members were afraid to join union organizing activities
- More funds/resources were used to organize
- No union was organized in the company

Effect on union organizing

Though it cannot be said that all tactics employed by the company are successful in avoiding unions, some are being undertaken just to delay the process of legal recognition. The longer the duration of union registration, the greater the struggle of the union to gain recognition. For instance, the U.P. SOLAIR study found out that on the average, it takes from 8

to 12 months (or more for some) for a union to be registered despite the fact that in the normal process organizing takes only almost 5 months. Box 2 provides an example of an organizing timeline, in view of union avoidance tactics used by employers, per experience of the Confederation of Labor and Social Services (CLASS).

Box 2. CLASS's Length of Time for Organizing Due to Union Avoidance by Employers	
Normal process of union organizing	Timeline
1. Background and Community Investigation	10 days
2. Contact Building	20 days
3. Core Group Formation	5 days
4. Meetings/Teachings	1 month
5. Preparation of Documents for Union Registration	1 day
6. Membership Campaign and Sign-on	5 days
7. Filing of Union Registration	1 day
8. Filing for Petition for Certification Election	1 day
9. Hearings for Pet. For CE	1-3 months
10. Inclusion/Exclusion proceedings	10 days
11. Certification Election	

PART TWO

UNION REVITALIZATION

What is union revitalization?

Union revitalization (URev) is:

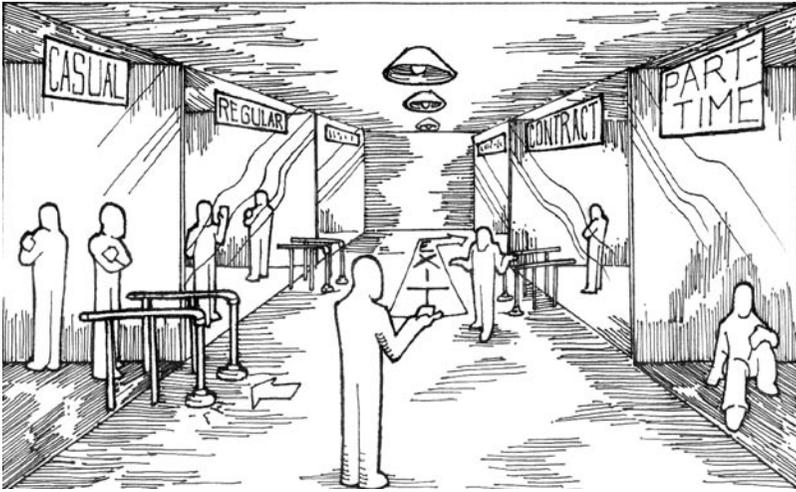
- A bottom-up purposive union renewal and recovery action comprising of both defensive and pro-active membership-oriented strategies to maintain and expand membership base and enhance membership commitment and participation to union goals and activities.
- It is also a strategy to enhance unions' legitimacy and influence at the workplace in particular and in society in general.
- URev requires changes in the very identity and purpose of unions – their membership coverage and structure, goals and functions.
- Expanding membership coverage may mean extending union representation to non-regular workers in the enterprise, organizing more women workers, young workers, white collar workers, and organizing and representing (though not necessarily through the union structure) workers in the informal economy.

At the core of URev discourse is the thinking that unions as learning organizations are capable of transformation, renewal and revitalization in times of crisis. And it is this state of crisis that pushes unions to revitalize. Points of crisis thus become turning points for unions to seriously analyze their purpose and strategies and to undertake necessary reforms.

Why should unions revitalize?

In the past, unions' constituencies comprised of regular workers under a clearly defined employment relationship. Conditions today are different:

- Employer adjustment measures to combat effects of cutthroat competition include adoption of tactics to render the union helpless, or outright bar the entry of unions in the workplace. In fact, the use of union avoidance tactics by employers has intensified in the last two decades.
- As a result, organizing workers has become more and more difficult, and is taking considerable time and resources. As pointed out by the U.P. SOLAIR study, it takes about 8 to 12 months to organize a union. Organizing tactics used which are often or mostly localized, are also quite ineffective, given the globalized unification of capital.
- Forging collective bargaining agreements at the enterprise level is becoming to be a rarity too in a considerable number of unionized establishments, and workers covered by CBAs are declining because of employer resistance and also because of the changes in the structure of the labor force.
- Meanwhile, there are existing unions that are still without CBAs in view of numerous delaying tactics, both legal and illegal, employed by management. In this regard, union representation and protection of workers' rights becomes a continuous struggle in the workplace.



- The organizable sector is shrinking with the rise of other non-regular forms of employment such as casuals, contractuels, temporary work, project-based work, etc. which blur the normal concept of employment relationship.
- The conventional trade union agenda in the past was focused on terms and conditions of regular employment. With the growing informalization of labor both in formal and informal enterprises, the conventional regular employment focus of a trade union thus limits its sphere of influence.

The immediate challenge to Philippine unions

Extending union representation to non-regular workers and other “non-traditional” sectors continues to be a challenge to unions in the Philippines as most unions do not go beyond workers in the enterprise in their responsibility sphere. In fact, the aforementioned recent study by a team from the U.P. SOLAIR reveals that:

- Only one in five unions claims their responsibility sphere to comprise all workers in the country.

- Also, union goals generally remain limited to issues confronting members at the workplace.
 - o These goals point to job regulation (security and freedom on the job), raising workers' consciousness, and promoting members' well-being (economic needs, workers' participation, profit-sharing, and joint ownership).
 - o These goals most often reflect the aspirations and needs of the workers in the unionized enterprise. Most unions in fact are glued on promoting and protecting the welfare of their immediate membership (or following the servicing model of unionism).
 - o Likewise, most unions are still wedded to the traditional triad of union functions – collective bargaining, education and strike. These functions are all directed again to the aspirations and needs of their immediate members – the regular workers in the enterprise.

The enterprise-based (decentralized) bargaining system in the Philippines is a major cause for limiting union representation to immediate workplace issues. Because bargaining is done at the enterprise level, only the problems and issues of workers in the enterprise are discussed and negotiated on the bargaining table.

Undoubtedly, unionism in the Philippines, like in many countries in the world, is in a state of crisis. This crisis situation pushes unions to undertake reforms on their vision-mission (union purpose), structures, processes and strategies. It is here where union revitalization comes in.

Do unions in the Philippines see the need to revitalize?

In U.P. SOLAIR study on union revitalization and social movement unionism in the Philippines, a great majority of the union respondents strongly agree to the need to revitalize the unions.

- Union avoidance human resource practices and strategies of employers are cited as the main reasons for union decline that necessitates union revitalization.
- Other reasons cited are: employers' manipulation and exploitation of workers to attain corporate objectives, strengthening of employers' organizations that are anti-union, and spread of outsourcing and subcontracting.

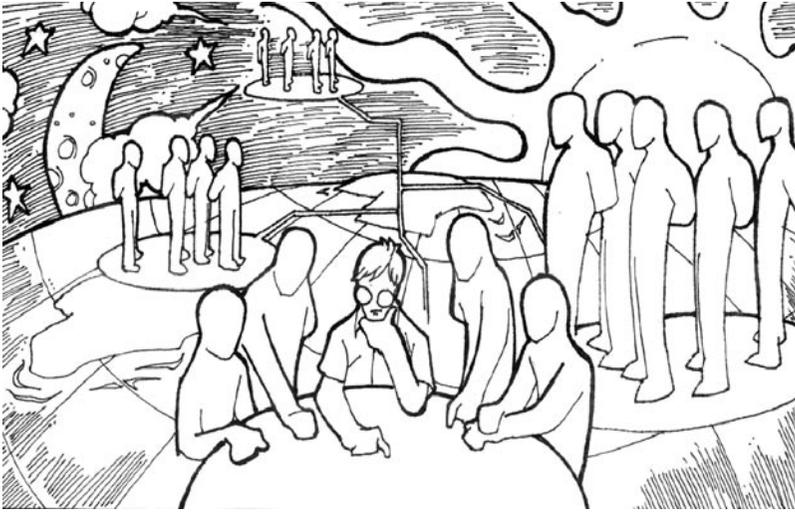
Role of union leadership and other factors in the union state of affairs

- Union leadership is also found to be a cause of discontent. One out of 5 of the respondents in the U.P. SOLAIR study see need to replace the current leadership.
 - Dynasties in the union leadership has been particularly obstructing according to some
- Others pin the blame on ideological differences, among other factors, which tend to fragment the unions and thwart efforts toward unified actions even in such basic issues as wage increase.

What are the core dimensions of union revitalization?

URev has two key dimensions - strategic leverage and organizational capacity. Both strategic leverage and organizational capacity need to be enhanced through union revitalization.

- ***Strategic leverage*** represents a union's degree of influence or bargaining power outside the union structure. It arises from the external environment in which the union operates (i.e., structure of industries, employers' attitude towards unions, labor markets, nature of technology and work organization, labor law and social legislations, the state of regulation of labor policy, availability of networks, etc.).



- **Organizational capacity**, meanwhile, pertains to all facets of a union’s internal structure (i.e., organizational structure, elected people, staff, volunteer positions, and human resource system). A union’s organizational structure determines how resources (people and money) are allocated and deployed. It defines authority and accountability, and how information flows in the organization. Organizational capacity determines a union’s ability to translate governance intentions into organizational action.

Understanding the importance of union leverage in URev

A shrinking industry where unions are most in number, employers’ intensive use of union avoidance tactics, the presence of labor-saving technology, relaxation of labor laws, lack of adequate labor standards inspectors, etc. are some factors that may weaken a union’s strategic leverage.

- A union with low strategic leverage—for instance, a union with low union density representing workers in an

industry with declining profitability—has little ability to affect outcomes relating to the workforce it represents.

- On the other hand, a labor legislation that strengthens the right of workers to unionization provides a good stimulus to enhancing a union’s strategic leverage.
- In pursuing URev, strategic leverage may also encompass unions’ initiatives and actions to open up and mutually engage with other social movements and in the transformations (i.e., solidarity, activism, democratization) ensuing from such actions. This is discussed in more detail below.

URev strategies that enhance organizational capacity

Enhancing organizational capacity focuses primarily on membership acquisition and expansion. There are URev strategies that enhance organizational capacity.

- The organizing model of unionism is often associated with union revitalization. This model utilizes a rank-and-file intensive, bottom-up and inclusive union-building approach. The model focuses on rank-and-file involvement in organizing, certification election, and first contract campaigns, the use of personal contact, leadership development, and the utilization of a combination of aggressive and creative internal and external pressure tactics.¹ The organizing model involves members rather than officers in the direct recruitment of non-members. It focuses on such principles as the “like-recruits-like,” and the organizing local, and actively directs its campaign on collective workplace issues. The “like-recruits-like” principle involves the action of membership recruitment being undertaken by a local union member or officer that shares the same characteristics, i.e. occupation or job, gender, as those targeted for organizing. An organizing local is a local union organizing another union in an unorganized workplace.

Under the organizing model, a culture of organizing permeates every activity and structure of the union. This entails a serious commitment of human and financial resources to organizing, involvement in international and local campaigns, and to the training, recruitment and effective utilization of rank-and-file volunteers from already organized bargaining units. In many unions, allocating resources to organizing is done by increasing the amount of union dues. The union dues structure allots a resource or budget specifically for organizing. The organizing model, thus, addresses union membership inertia by spurring rank-and-file interest and participation in union activities at the start of the organizing campaign. It sends the grassroots members out to organize more. In the organizing model, the organizing local composed of rank-and-file union members, takes the center stage in organizing campaigns. The role of the union organizer, thus, becomes facilitative— not to lead the group but to help build the unit.

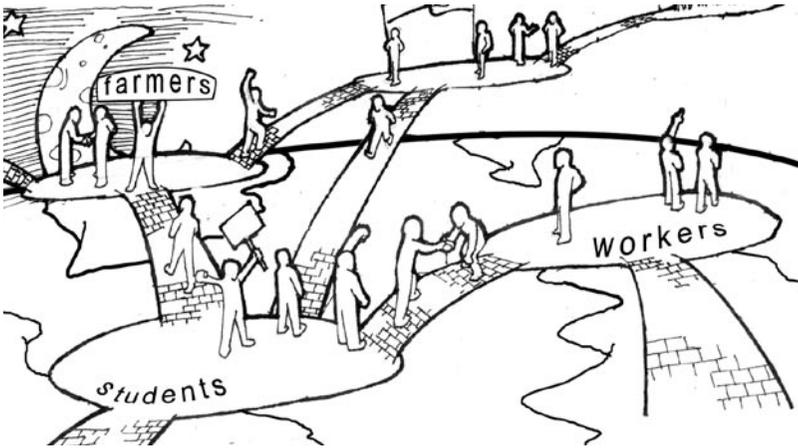
- One is merger of labor federations working in the same industry.
- The establishment of a rank-and-file organizing committee is also an effective way of promoting internal union democracy and grassroots membership involvement.
- Limiting the tenure of union leaders to a specified period to address leadership entrenchment by a few is likewise an example of promoting internal union democracy.

Which actions comprise union revitalization?

There are many labor actions that comprise URev. The major actions however are following:

¹ Bronfenbrenner, Kate and Tom Juravich. 1998. "It Takes More Than House Calls: Organizing to Win with a Comprehensive Union-Building Strategy." In *Organizing to Win – New Research on Union Strategies*, eds. Kate Bronfenbrenner, et al., 19-36. New York: Cornell University.

- A broader articulation of trade union identity and purpose underpinned by populist/social movement type of unionism



- Focus on massive organizing
- Membership involvement and activism
- Union democracy
- Opening up and forging sustainable alliances and coalitions with other social movements
- Labor internationalism and solidarity (for information exchange, enhancing bargaining power, coordinative labor action, and mobilization for campaigns)

Broader articulation of trade union purpose

A union's identity and structure is primarily defined by its articulated purpose. In defining trade union purpose, Ross Martin in his book, 'Trade Unionism – Purposes and Forms', posits five theories or categories based on two dimensions: a) whose interest, and b) areas of interests (Table 2). How unions

frame their responsibility and articulate their goals and functions define their processes and forms of action.

Many unions are still confined to workplace issues and workplace politics, failing to extend the boundaries of union representation to the non-traditional sectors of society. Focus on narrow sectoral interests constrains many unions to sustain their alliances and engagements with other peoples' organizations and advocacy and development-oriented NGOs. Moreover, the ideological underpinnings of certain sectors of trade union movements inhibit them to give up their militancy in favor of 'collaboration and cooperation' with institutions espousing neoliberal agenda and policies. Some that do engage with institutions of capital proceed with caution, or on a limited engagement, so as not to be lured into the 'trap of cooptation'.

Unionism's crisis today—which is also a crisis of purpose—has drastically reduced both the movement's strategic leverage and organizational capacity. This crisis has prompted unions to undertake labor revitalization projects. Nonetheless, if trade union purpose and identity are narrowed down by its own failure to extend the boundaries of representation and engage with other types of workers and social movements, any attempt to undertake union revitalization may prove difficult, problematic and limited. In this regard, social movement unionism can also be an effective means of articulating purpose and a strategy to enhance the trade unions' strategic leverage.

As mentioned earlier, the trade union purpose in the Philippines is narrowed down by issues and concerns of the unions' immediate membership – the regular workers and only one in five unions claim that their responsibility sphere comprises all workers in the country. In this regard, extending the mantle of protection of unions to other types of workers including those in the informal economy becomes a challenge for union revitalization.

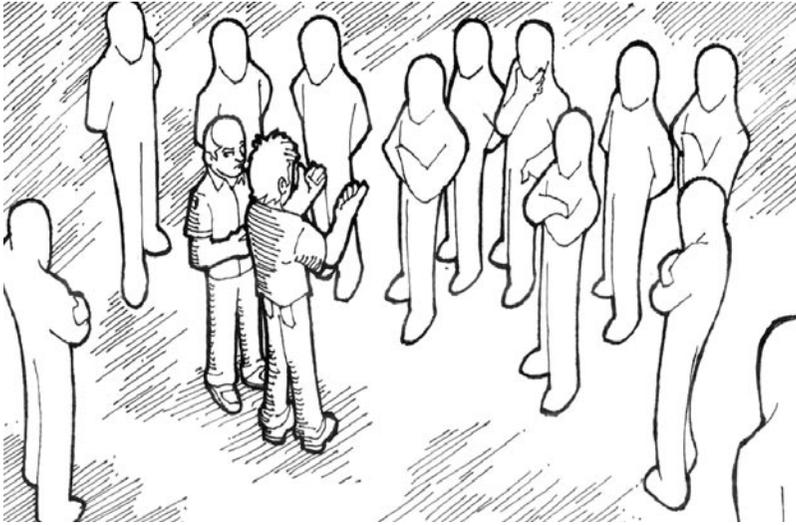
Table 2: Theories of Trade Union Purpose			
Dimension 1 (Whose Interests/)		Dimension 2 (Interest in What?)	
	Responsibility	Goals (layers)	Functions
Pluralist	Union members	Job Regulation; security and freedom on the job; participation in administration of industry	Collective Bargaining (rule-making)
Syndicalist	Working class	Raise workers' consciousness; overthrow capitalism; administer industry after revolution	Education (revolutionary and administration); strike organization; administration
Marxist-Leninist	Working class	Raise workers' consciousness; help overthrow capitalism	Education (revolutionary); strike organization (party-directed)
Organicist	Society/Nation	Promoting members' moral well-being; promoting their material well-being; workers' participation, co-operative enterprises, profit-sharing, joint ownership	Education (moral improvement); collective bargaining
Authoritarian	State/Party	Promoting production; protecting workers' interests (chiefly or wholly by raising their productivity)	Education (for productivity); administrative participation (under state/party direction)

Source: Ross M. Martin, *Trade Unionism: Purposes and Forms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 96.

Focus on massive organizing

As pointed out in the first part of this handbook, union organizing in today's highly competitive globalized environment has become more difficult. In fact, nearly half of the respondents

of a recent survey conducted by a research team from U.P. SOLAIR admitted that they indeed had difficulties organizing. Those respondents who claimed that union organizing starting in the 1990s has become more difficult compared to the 1980s also comprised nearly half of the respondents.



Data also indicates that respondents from both national and local union affiliates have been experiencing more difficulties than independents. The gender effect can also be established by the fact that unions where majority of members are males found it more difficult to organize. In the same vein, organizations which have not been around for long also suffered setbacks.

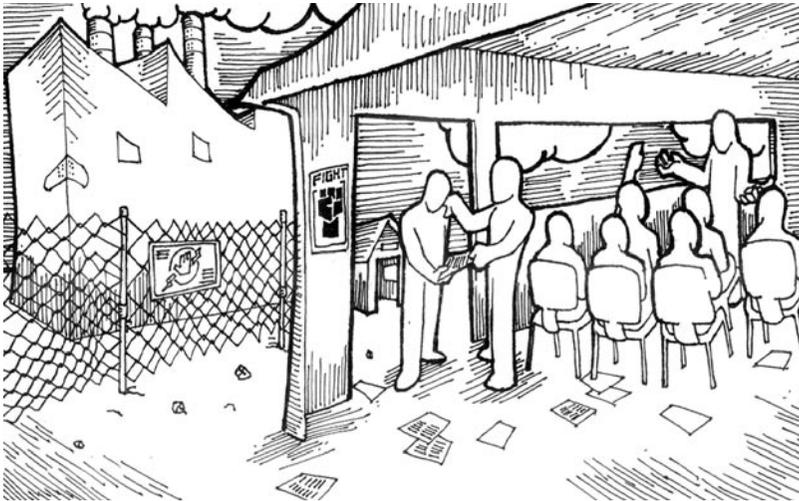
Organizing is at the heart of URev. This is the reason why URev is often associated with the organizing model of unionism. This model of unionism utilizes a rank-and-file intensive, bottom-up and inclusive union-building approach. It involves members rather than officers in the direct recruitment of non-members. It focuses on such principles as 'like-recruits-like' and 'organizing local' and actively directs its campaign on collective workplace issues.

URev indeed requires focus on organizing, in fact relentlessly. This is because in countries like the Philippines where bargaining takes place at the enterprise level (not industry level) union strength relies on membership number. The

union's flesh and muscle depends on the number of members. It is important to note that organizing here does not only mean organizing among regular workers. It also includes organizing among non-regular workers although not necessarily within the traditional union structure.

Union tactics and strategies of Philippine unions

There are various examples of union tactics and strategies at the enterprise level that may lead to union revitalization. In the U.P. SOLAIR study, several URev-related organizing tactics used by unions are identified.



Conducting survey among members on collective bargaining proposals appears to be the most common strategy employed by unions to counter employers' union avoidance tactics. Some of the other most frequent tactics include:

- Having a rank-and-file committee
- Distributing leaflets to members
- Holding small group meetings during the campaign

- Meeting away from workplace to promote membership, and
- Identification of grievances as bases for recruitment of union members

The employment of consultants and the establishment of an organizing committee or team among targeted members (following the “like recruits like” principle) are also popular to some extent. Independent unions seem to utilize the services of consultants more often than other groups. Independent unions also conduct surveys among members regarding collective bargaining proposals more frequently than others.

National union organizations, on the other hand, resort more to identifying with their prospective members’ grievances to catapult recruitment, and setting up of an organizing committee or team among targeted members (“like recruits like” principle). National organizations likewise tend to file grievance cases more frequently—as much as two or more cases per month. Locals (whether affiliated or independent), on the other hand, resort more to linkages for support.

Unions that have been in existence for only a few years also tend to rely on external networks to support them in their organizing strategies. They are likewise more conscientious in getting the views of members regarding collective bargaining proposals.

Older unions (those which have been in existence for 21 to 40 years), on the other hand, tend to enlist the help of rank-and-file volunteers from more established units when organizing.

Younger unions, by contrast, tend to resort more to the establishment of a rank-and-file committee. Meanwhile, unions in companies that sell their products or services locally and internationally seem to resort to home visits of prospective members as part of their organizing strategies. They are also keener on establishing rank-and-file committees.

Extent to which organizing tactics rendered organizing successful

How successful are these organizing tactics? A closer examination of the factors that influence the success rate of these organizing strategies indicates that:

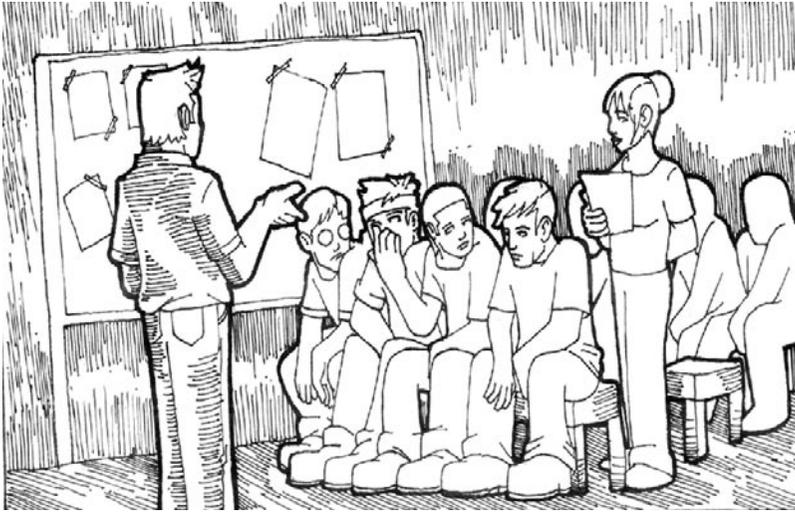
- Frequent group meetings during campaigns leads to a higher level of success, and
- Likewise, the more unions resort to (a) setting up an organizing committee or team among targeted members (“like recruits like” principle); and (b) use grievances as basis for recruitment of prospective union members, the higher the rate of success.

In this regard, setting up a rank-and-file organizing committee that utilizes the strategy of ‘like-recruits-like’ and using grievances for membership recruitment enhances the success rate of organizing tactics. The former strategy employs union leaders/organizers from already organized establishments with similar characteristics with the workers in target enterprise to do the organizing. If the target enterprise for organizing is comprised of women workers then the organizer should be a woman worker preferably from the same industry or sector.

Membership involvement and activism

As a grassroots-oriented bottom-up strategy, URev spurs membership involvement and activism. Some union tactics that can enhance membership involvement and activism are the following:

- Local union staff members act as organizers
- Election of stewards
- Training stewards to organize based on grievances



- Rank-and-file organizing committee conducts much of the recruitment activities
- Stewards handling grievances
- Members playing an active role in preparing their grievances
- Filing two or more grievances per month
- Publicizing grievance losses and victories
- Organizers systematically targeting unorganized units and spending time in the field to personally visit new employees
- Assigning one grievance chairperson per chapter to handle all hearings
- Increasing the dues to raise the budget for organizing
- Sending rank-and-file members to seminars provided by other labor oriented institutions

What tactics are predominantly used by unions today?

In the U.P. SOLAIR study, one tactic that predominates among the unions covered in the survey is the sending of rank-and-file members to seminars given by other labor-oriented institutions. Two other modes are frequently used to enhance membership involvement and activism: (1) utilizing local union staff members to act as organizers; and (2) election of stewards. However, increasing union dues for organizing purposes is seldom or rarely resorted to.

Other tactics mentioned are: (1) attending political rallies and improving the qualification of officers; (2) holding regular general membership assemblies; and (3) orientation, especially of the newly regularized workers.

Factors that account for use of varying rank-and-file organizing tactics

The following trends can be deduced from the UP SOLAIR study:

- There are more unions in companies oriented to both international and local markets which allow their members to play an active role in preparing grievances.
- Unions in the National Capital Region (NCR) also tend to publicize the outcome of grievance cases—whether victory or loss—compared to their counterparts outside the region.
- Gender predominance has a significant influence on the practice of sending rank-and-file members to seminars and training provided by other labor-oriented institutions. Unions composed largely of women typically employ this tactic more often.
- The type of union also defines how frequently local union staff members are tapped to act as organizers, as is

typical among national unions. Local affiliates often elect stewards. This is not a practice among independents.

- Local affiliates allow stewards to handle grievances more frequently than independents or national unions do. The pattern is similar with regard to sending rank-and-file workers to seminars and training given by other labor organizations.

Extent to which rank-and-file tactics enhance membership involvement and activism

The following factors influence the extent to which rank-and-file tactics enhance membership participation and activism:

- When stewards are trained to organize around grievances, the chances of success in enhancing membership involvement and activism is higher.
- Assigning one chair per chapter to handle all hearings and allowing organizers only to handle arbitration also contribute to a high success rate.
- Increasing union dues to raise the budget for organizing also increases success rate.

Union democracy

Union democracy is a critical issue in many unions in the Philippines. One author observes that “members of the ‘gerontocratic class’² lead most segments of the trade union movement” in the Philippines on the assumptions that they have

² The ‘gerontocratic class’ however is slowly fading away as many of the old-timers who pioneered the establishment of trade unions in the country have passed away. But still, most unions remain in the hands of family members. Therefore, it can be said that dynasties still lord it over many unions in the country, particularly at the federation and national levels. There are, nevertheless, a few that have taken measures to professionalize the ranks of leaders in their organization by basing leadership recruitment on competencies possessed by individuals.

“more experience and are more qualified to keep a boat on stable course.” However, this also means that they are more conservative and are less interested in reforms. In addition, the same author argues that there are family dynasties in the movement where family members inherit positions just like in politics. This may be regarded as an anomaly of union democracy.



Internal democracy is crucial to union revitalization. Studies have indicated that weakening of membership involvement and activism is also traced to lack of union democracy as decision-making and leadership in the union structure is highly concentrated in a few officers. The typical top-down approach in union decision-making makes for very little initiative to increase membership involvement beyond their limited participation in organizing. In fact, many activist-leaders interpret the decline of labor’s power as a mandate to change – to break leadership perpetuation and conservatism in union organizations. Thus URev actions are likewise directed towards breaking entrenchment of union leadership to a few. New leaders with activist experience (often gained outside the labor movement) who offer new interpretations of union goals and strategies are among the major sources of union transformation or union revitalization.

In the Philippines, the unprecedented move taken by the National Federation of Labor (NFL) to amend their by-laws

that limited the terms of the two highest positions, the president and the general secretary, to just two four year terms without reelection is actually an effort to put in place union democracy. This move has been taken to avoid the entrenchment of self-perpetuating leaders and allow the younger generation with novel ideas and strategies to go up the ladder of union leadership.

Likewise, the strategy of establishing a rank-and-file committee may enhance internal union democracy as rank-and-file members are given more participation and responsibility, and decision-making power in the area of organizing. That this tactic is among the most frequently used among unions surveyed by the U.P. SOLAIR study is a positive development.

Some unions have initiated internal structural changes to address union democracy. For example, the institutionalization of the committee system in every organizational and operational structure of the Fortune Tobacco Labor Union replaced the old shop steward system. In the committee system, everyone is encouraged to participate not only in the decision-making processes but in the successive stages of planning, implementing and administering.

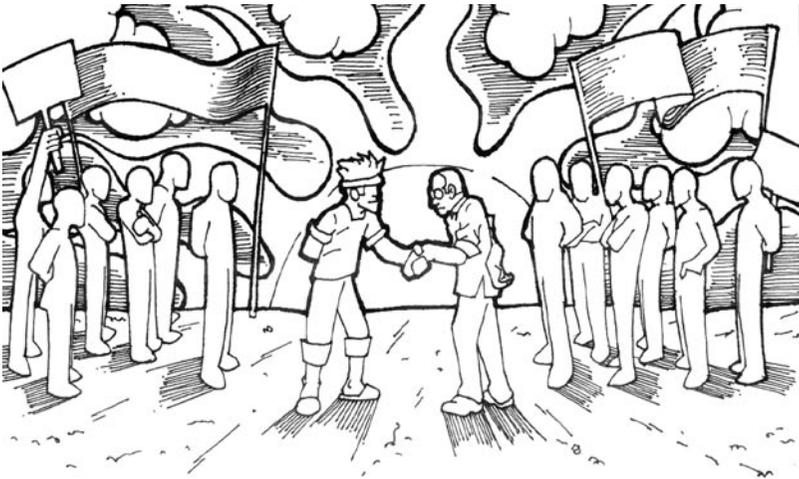
Opening up and forging sustainable alliances and coalitions with other social movements

The U.P. SOLAIR study highlights that trade unions have very limited partnership or alliances beyond the union/federation. These engagements are mostly issue-based alliances with various groups limited to campaigns and rallies against wage increases, human rights abuse, sexual harassment, and discrimination; anti-GMA³ protests; democracy and governance concerns; and social reforms and other socio-political issues. Project-based engagements are mostly on labor education, gender training, and cooperatives. Moreover, as indicated by the U.P. SOLAIR study, the organizing tactic of establishing community-labor coalitions is rarely if at all utilized by the unions.

Alliances and affiliations are often forged for collective bargaining negotiation, labor education, advocacy and training,

³ GMA stands for Gloria Macapagal Arroyo – the current President of the Philippines.

recruitment support, organizing, strikes, medical missions, and assistance in political campaigns for labor demands and issues.



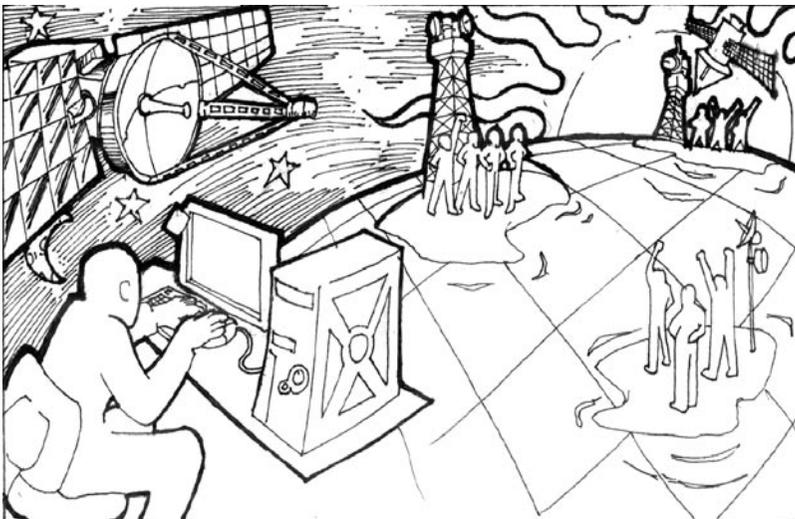
There are factors that contribute to the effectiveness or success of working with alliances. The U.P. SOLAIR study reveals the following:

- Shared goals and forms of labor action—an obvious indication of their mutual relationship with federations and trade unions partners – topping the list
- Willingness to act on the part of all local unions involved came in second, reflecting the premium they put on team spirit and cooperation.
- Equal representation/democratic participation landed third, showing the value the respondents place on democratic processes.
- Availability of resources and funds was only given an average rating but was considered highly with respect to alliances outside the country.

Labor internationalism and solidarity

Apart from generating possible funding support, unions affiliate and/or forge linkages with international labor federations and organizations for information exchange, enhancing bargaining power, coordinating labor action, and mobilization for campaigns.

- Many union federations and labor centers in the country are affiliated with various labor internationals such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs) namely: Building and Wood Workers International (BWI), Education International (EI), International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mines and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), International Metal Federation (IMF), International Textile, Garments and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF), Public Services International (PSI), and Union Network International (UNI). There are other global unions such as International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and International Arts and Entertainment Alliance (IAEA).



- While the impact of international affiliation may be felt directly at the federation- and labor center-level, most union members at the local level show little understanding and appreciation of the role of labor internationalism. In the U.P. SOLAIR study, only a few (13%) considered international affiliation as the best mechanism to meet their union objectives.
- Nonetheless, the Internet has provided a good medium for unions to launch and sustain global campaigns for the protection of workers' rights. The real time and cost-effective global outreach of Internet-based campaigns have indeed linked many local unions from various parts of the world. Where before coordination and campaigns were only confined among federations and labor centers all over the world, now with the power of the Internet, even a union member in one country can communicate and coordinate with another union member from another country. In effect, advances in information technology have made labor more international and solidarity actions albeit episodic more possible.

Are women issues crucial in union revitalization?

Any meaningful labor revitalization must take into consideration the fact that nearly half of those in the working population are women. Women issues in the workplace must be made integral to the question of union revitalization. Given the unfair and discriminatory practices against women, there should be a conscious effort on the part of unions to scrutinize work policies, rules and conditions that affect women. One way of doing it is by looking into how women/gender issues are treated within the union organizational structure, programs and activities, and collective bargaining agreements.

The U.P. SOLAIR study reveals that women are still fewer than men in union bargaining teams. Women generally count 1 out of 5 of the bargaining team members. Even in predominantly female unions, the proportion of women representation in the bargaining remains the same. As regard gender-related proposals



in the CBA, there is slightly more than a 50% chance that women's issues are taken up in bargaining proposals. This means that women-related proposals are accepted in CBAs only half of the time. Moreover, in listing proposals on women-related issues for CBA negotiation, there is overwhelming mention of health and reproductive issues but very little of equally important issues such as equality on the job (one response), equal pay for equal work (one response); family planning, parenting, solo parenting, day care (one response for each), and sexual harassment provisions (two responses). In short, gender equality has still a long way to go in terms of acceptance as a valid, urgent and legitimate issue worthy of being presented in the bargaining table.

Moreover, the following observations are not so reassuring with regard to the overall participation of women in trade union activities: 1) women constitute on the average only between 0 and 40 percent of union leadership and collective bargaining team membership, and 2) more than 50% of the respondents said they have no gender related programs such as women's committees, women's desks, gender sensitivity training and affirmative action policies for women. Gender sensitivity and empowerment were mentioned only six times in the listing of collective bargaining proposals.

This is where labor revitalization efforts should come in. With more and more women moving into the workforce as a result

of the changing nature and landscape of work, it is essential for women to be made aware of their rights and struggle to achieve them. Gender issues are potent organizing issues around which advocacies may be focused. However this is contingent on more women getting into leadership positions and getting more representation in bargaining teams. Overall, results of the survey of the U.P. SOLAIR study indicate that the number of women who hold leadership positions in unions and membership positions in bargaining teams are disproportionately less than men.

What is the link between labor revitalization and social movement unionism?

To the extent that unions are also organizers of a social movement, labor revitalization finds expression in promoting community unionism where union organizing takes place outside the workplace and across territorial and industrial communities, and where multiple identities and broader interests are relevant to organizing.

Indeed, social movement unionism (SMU) is an expression of union revitalization. In fact, SMU may be the single most important strategy to address the union's strategic leverage. Authors point out that the increased use of a social movement repertoire in organizing campaigns is one of the changes needed for revitalization.

PART THREE

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM

This part will focus on the concept and practice of SMU. Included in the discussions are the following:

- An introduction on social movements since Social Movement Unionism (or SMU for brevity) belongs to that category
- A summary of perceptions about SMU from some literature
- Alliance of Progressive Labor's (APL) concept of SMU – as this is closer to home
- Trends in theorizing about SMU as propounded by various authors
- Experiences of countries like Africa, Germany, Great Britain and the Philippines

The findings of the UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR) study regarding the following are likewise presented:

- Unions' views regarding SMU
- Unions' alliances with other organizations
- Unions' assessment of how effective they are today
- Suggested alternative frameworks or approaches to help revitalize unions

Finally, this chapter attempts to point out the benefits of shifting to SMU and to forward reasons why Philippine unions need to have a shift in strategy. This is followed by factors that must be considered if SMU is needed to revitalize unions in the Philippines.

What is a social movement?

Social Movement Unionism abstracts from a bigger context --- a social movement. In essence, a social movement consists of a group of individuals or groups:

- who band together to work toward the achievement of some goals
- who are guided by a common ideology
- who endeavor to have a sustained effort in campaigning for their cause, and
- who use various forms of collective actions such as mass demonstrations, nationwide strikes, public meetings, use of mass media, etc.

As you will see later, Social Movement Unionism can exhibit all these characteristics of social movements.

Now let us get you through various concepts of Social Movement Unionism.

First, let us examine a general definition of what SMU is. The literature refers to SMU as:

- Both a “trend of theory and practice in contemporary trade unionism.”⁴
 - o As a theory, it attempts to explain why unions are acting in a certain manner at some point in time and puts the explanation in a set of statements,

⁴ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. “Social Movement Unionism.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Movement_Unionism (accessed August 29, 2008)

- assertions, or principles. A theory is also often used in the contemporary world to mean a conjecture, a discourse, an opinion, a speculation, or a hypothesis. It can represent a model of reality that can be empirically tested through observation.
- o As a practice, it refers to the trade unions' use of an approach, or a strategy that targets some purpose.
- It is said to be strongly associated with the organising model of trade unionism. To a certain extent, observers believe that it overlaps with “community unionism.”⁵
 - SMU therefore tries to unite trade unions and the labor movement with other coalitions or alliances in order to strengthen their position against an entity or an issue that they are targeting. Through SMU, unions and other groups collaborate with each other to advance mutually beneficial goals.

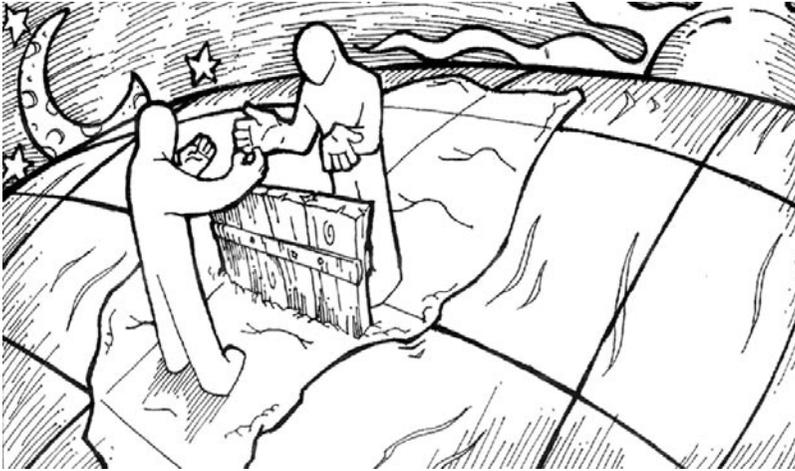
What are the various perceptions regarding SMU?

Many authors wrote about Social Movement Unionism. Most notable are the works of Peter Waterman (now retired Professor of the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands), Kim Moody, Kim Scipes (who wrote about the Kilusang Mayo Uno's practice of SMU in the various *welgang bayan* or nationwide strikes), Rob Lambert and others.

Below is an attempt to present a summary of SMU as derived from various sources.

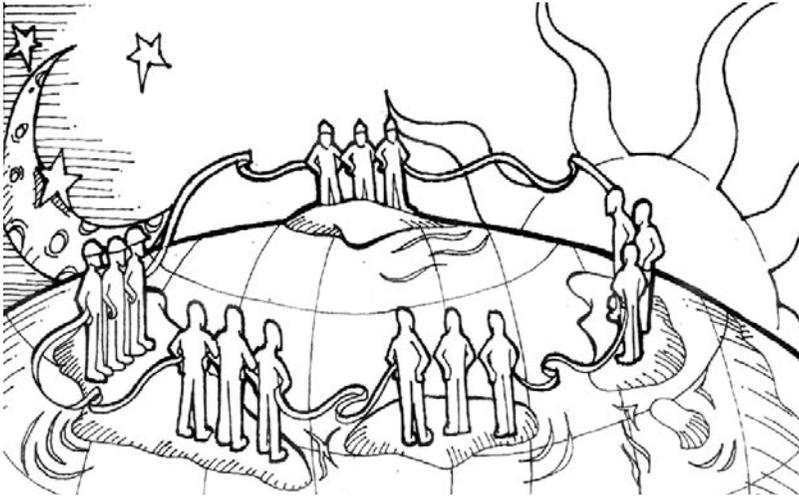
1. SMU is about trade unions building solidarity alliances and coalitions, not only with each other (i.e. fellow unions or workers organizations), but with other groups who are facing similar interests and problems.

⁵ Community unionism is a widely used term in union and community practice. It refers to the various ways in which trade unions work with communities and community organisations to push their aims.



- These groups include political forces or parties, the informal sector, community groups, civil society, and others. Example of problems or interests they might be concerned with are: privatization, the value added tax, or gender issues.
2. Issues tackled by coalitions are varied, and they go beyond organizing, collective bargaining, job regulation and other traditional concerns of the labor movement.
 - The target may be (but not always) increased worker and union control over the labor process, investments, subcontracting/outsourcing, and other issues that impact negatively on labor and the general populace.
 - SMU works on a broader social and political agenda. The aim generally is to bring about social change or social transformation
 3. SMU entails the internationalism of the labor movement because alliances go beyond the enterprise, local and national boundaries. Therefore, information about the struggles of labor in other parts of the world is vital.

- Membership in international trade secretariats can serve as a means to effect such alliances, although these may not be necessary.

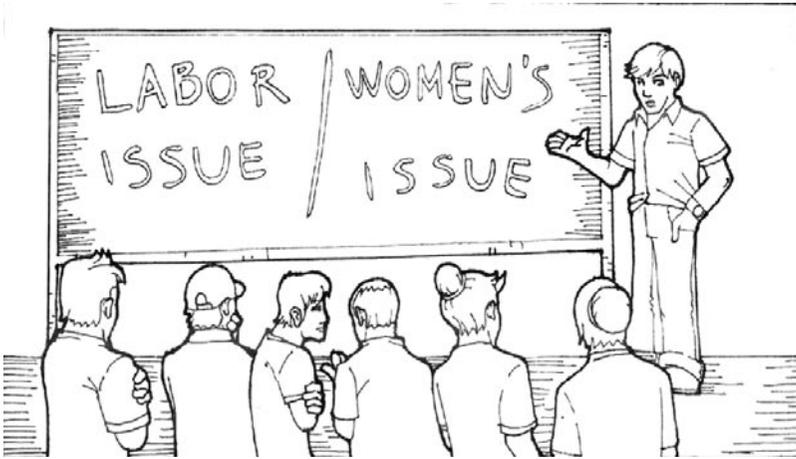


4. Thus, SMU also involves considerable union participation in transnational network movements.

- The green movement, women’s liberation, work-life balance, anti-pollution, food security, eradication or minimization of child labor, domestic violence, migrant labor issues, anti-poverty, and anti-discrimination campaigns are examples of such transnational network movements.

5. SMU is a means to confront the globalization of capital (i.e., neoliberal globalization) and production.

- It is an articulation of the saying: “united we stand, divided we fall,” and therefore, it can serve as a means to strengthen the domain of the trade union movement.



6. It is often posed as a viable means to address the union crisis being felt world-wide.
 - Some strongly believe that it is the only means to avert union decline.
7. With SMU, there is a greater likelihood of protecting/advancing the rights and welfare of weak social classes, medium and small enterprise workers, informal sector workers as well as irregular workers, if they are within the ambit of groups forming SMU alliances.





- This would depend of course on how strong and persistent the groups are in advancing their cause.
8. SMU networks use various forms of collective actions such as demos, rallies and the like.
- There are four Cs that serve as instruments to link these networks: communication, coordination, collaboration and cooperation; particularly in the sharing of resources. Having such activities on a sustained basis bring more possibilities for success.
9. Unions usually provide the leadership among coalition members of Social Movement Unionism, although there is no structure of dominance.
- This means that participating groups are on an equal footing, but unions are expected to take the lead or initiative in various activities, especially in those that affect the workers.



10. Coalition-building is not a recent innovation of Social Movement Unionism since it has formed part of the repertoire of many unions, worldwide.

- But the present context is different because of the ever increasing effects of globalization. In fact, SMU has spurred far-reaching interests as a means to confront the globalization of capital (i.e., neoliberal globalization) and production, and as a means to revitalize unions to many proponents of SMU.

What is APL's Concept of SMU?

The Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) adheres to Social Movement Unionism. APL's concept of SMU articulates most of the elements discussed by various authors. To APL⁶, SMU is "a strategy directed at recognizing, organizing and mobilizing all types of workers and unions for engagements in different arenas of struggle." It elaborates that "this strategy is not limited to 'trade union' organizing and has been developed precisely to respond to new work arrangements where employee-employer relationships do not exist or are not clear."

⁶ APL Primer: Part Four: Social Movement Unionism." http://www.apl.org.ph/APLPrimer/aplprimer_part4.pdf (accessed August 29, 2008)

APL goes on to say that SMU “seeks to address even the “social costs” of oppressive economic and political systems... recognizes the broadness of workers’ interests and the diversity and complexity of work arrangements. As such, it is geared towards the struggle for workers’ rights in all aspects — economic, political and socio-cultural—and at all levels— local, national, global. In short, the strategic objective of social movement unionism is nothing less than social transformation.”

What trends can be deduced from the various conceptualizations regarding SMU?

There are at least five trends that can be extracted from SMU. They include the following:

1. The fusion aspect – through SMU - labor fuses with other social movements such that distinctions between and among these movements are abolished and it becomes difficult to distinguish, say, between a labor issue and a women’s issue.
2. SMU as an articulation or a means to revitalize unions to confront globalization. Proponents of this view indicate that SMU is not only one of the tools for union revitalization. It is supposed to be the single most important strategy to address the union’s strategic leverage. Furthermore, the increased use of a social movement repertoire in organizing campaigns is cited as one of the changes needed for revitalization and to combat the effects of a globalized economy.
3. Social Movement Unionism as a process of extending union boundaries - it is a means for unions, through strategic coalitions, to carry out their struggle beyond the workplace (and beyond national boundaries).
4. New social unionism - as a new social unionism, SMU surpasses “existing models of ‘economic,’ ‘political’ or

‘political-economic’ unionism. This is done through the following (Peter Waterman, 217, 249):

- by addressing itself to all forms of work
- by taking on socio-cultural forms, and
- by addressing itself to “civil society,” with a distinct international dimension



5. SMU as a more grassroots style, social justice framework of operation. SMU uses organized workers:

- “to mobilize those who are less able to sustain self-mobilisation: the poor, the unemployed, the casualised workers, the neighbourhood organisations.”

How do unions in various countries experience or manifest their use of SMU?

Countries known to have adopted Social Movement Unionism include, among others, the Philippines, Brazil and South Africa. German and British trade unions are also documented to have been engaging in coalitions for some time, and may be

counted among the ranks of those groups embracing Social Movement Unionism.

In this handbook, the experiences of South Africa, Germany, Great Britain and the Philippines will be discussed for the reader to have a look at how unions in these countries used SMU to advance their agenda for social change.

South Africa

The labor movement in this region was reported to have taken the shape of Social Movement Unionism from the early 1970s onward when the independent trade union movement campaigns were linked to the broader anti-Apartheid struggle.⁷

A network of personal, sectoral and professional contacts supported the campaigns of South African trade unions in various ways (Bezuidenhout, 2000: 8-9)

- When South African unions organized workers in subsidiaries of multinational corporations, they linked up with trade unions representing workers at factories in home countries, particularly in the 1970s when trade unions campaigned for recognition,



⁷ The anti-apartheid struggle was basically directed against racial segregation and discrimination against the black people.

- South African unions likewise called on trade unions in the same transnational corporations abroad for more generalized campaigns.
- Many South African trade unions joined international trade secretariats.
- Also, international solidarity became prominent especially in industries with globalized production, such as steel and motor manufacturing, and in industries that were particularly vulnerable to tariff cuts, such as clothing and textiles,

However, there were several potential or actual problems affecting the continued survival of SMU in COSATU.⁸ Hirschsohn, (1998, p. 661)⁹ indicated these to include:

- organisational problems arising out of rapid growth and incorporation into centralized bargaining and economic policy making
- the 'brain-drain' of leaders evident from shop stewards to general secretaries
- declining participation levels by rank and file members
- the transformation of representative structures to mere conduits of communication, and
- the steady erosion of worker control over policy issues

⁸ COSATU stands for "Congress of South African Trade Unions."

⁹ As mentioned in Bramble, T. (2003), "Social Movement Unionism since the Fall of Apartheid: the Case of NUMSA on the East Rand" http://espace.uq.edu.au/eserv/UQ:10640/tb_sachp_03.pdf (accessed September 2, 2008).

Germany

In the case of Germany, Social Movement Unionism as experienced by unions in Hamburg is presented (see map for its location).



Figure 1. Map Showing Location of Hamburg

As documented by Ian Greer (2006),¹⁰ SMU in Hamburg was prodded by the privatization of the city's hospitals and other causes that led to the erosion of the unions' ability to influence restructuring at the local level. Thus, unions were forced to reach out to potential local allies that included professional associations, individual patients, oppositional political parties, social clubs and other parts of civil society.

The conditions demanded *a shift from a social partnership to a social movement orientation*, partly to compensate for loss of state support. For 44 years the unions had close ties with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) which led Hamburg's local government continuously. During those years, unions had access to government policymaking in the executive and legislative branches.

In the mid-1990s however, government advocates of modernization targeted Hamburg's publicly owned hospitals,

¹⁰ Ian Greer: "Social Movement Unionism and the Breakdown of Neo-Corporatist Industrial Relations: The Case of Hamburg's hospitals." June 2006 <http://www.wun.ac.uk/rcc/pdfs/econference/papers/ian%20Greer.pdf> (accessed September 1, 2008)

arguing, that “because of pressures from the conservative federal government and the cash-strapped local health insurance funds, local public health care provision was not efficient enough.” The hospitals were restructured by a series of agreements that created a wholly owned subsidiary of the government, called Landesbetrieb Krankenhauser (LBK) which took over the management of eight hospitals. Other agreements provided for the protection of workers from mandatory layoffs and pay concessions.

Unionists, work councils, managers and politicians, mostly affiliated with SPD worked out the agreements. The elected work councils replaced the more militant group. Co-management rather than confrontation was viewed as a more productive strategy to represent the workers.

The social partnership at LBK was not to last due to a “broader shift in local politics away from SPD dominance, partly due to deindustrialization.”¹¹ In the 1980s, the social democrat camp wanted to make Hamburg more attractive to business. They turned not only to public sector restructuring but also to new strategies to attract private investment. The deep restructuring was also triggered by the local policymakers’ dissatisfaction with the progress of LBK in adapting to the new, more marketized environment of health care. The government could not provide enough funds to keep up with technological change and to refurbish the decaying buildings of the LBK. Hence, privatization was deemed necessary.

In 2001, another round of restructuring began at the behest of the newly elected government. It announced plans to sell its majority stake in the hospitals to a private company. Trade unionists made a counter-proposal, supported by the SPD, of finding a minority shareholder to buy a 49.9% share, but were not successful. Thus in 2003, the Senate reached an agreement to transfer the hospital to a private owner. In response to the Senate’s new policy, LBK workers rallied along with a number of allies to organize one of the city-state’s first ballot initiatives (i.e., to vote yes or no to the privatization bill). Their slogan was ***Gesundheit ist keine Ware*** [“health is not a commodity”]. A

¹¹ Ibid.



coalition composed of other unions (especially the local DGB¹²), political parties, globalization critics, the doctors' association (Marburger Bund), individual patients and ver.di's national office carried out the initiative. Anti-privatization campaigners collected 100,000 signatures and organized numerous rallies and demonstrations which generated a massive growth in attendance at workplace meetings.

The collapse of the Schill party¹³ in late 2003 called for a new election for the City Council just as the bill to privatize LBK was passing through legislative channels. This meant further delays in the final approval of privatization because the election happened on the same date as the ballot initiative. In the January 2004 election, more than three-quarters of voters voted for the unions' initiative to stop privatization. Although this was a victory for the union, the conservatives achieved record success.

¹² DGB stands for "Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund" which is the Confederation of German Trade Unions. This is the umbrella organisation for trade unions in Germany. The DGB coordinates joint demands and activities within the German trade union movement. It represents the member unions in contact with the government authorities, the political parties and the employers' organisations. However, the umbrella organisation is not directly involved in collective bargaining and does not conclude pay agreements. -The affiliated unions of the DGB negotiate collective agreements with the employers, e.g. for income, working hours or holiday. In cases of labour disputes they organise strikes and pay strike support to their members. (<http://www.dgb.de/sprachen/englisch/dgb.htm> - accessed December 17, 2008)

¹³ The conservative Schill party was the creation of Ronald Schill, a former Judge

The new government ignored the result of the union-sponsored initiative. It proposed and passed a law that countered the results of the ballot initiative (e.g. by not allowing them to go to the voters at the same time as a state or federal election, banning the practice of collecting signatures on the street, etc). The unions launched a second campaign, the “save the ballot initiative.”

With all the actions shown by the LBK to confront privatization and related issues, it is believed that LBK has “the markings of Social Movement Unionism: a renewed mobilization of members and allies from outside the labor camp (and from other unions) and a shift of emphasis to goals beyond the workplace, namely local democracy and public service provision.”¹⁴

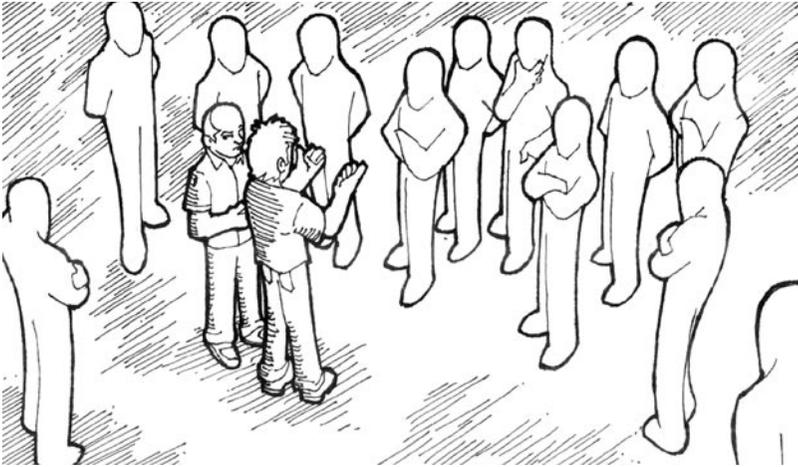
Britain

Although reaching out to other groups to emphasize social justice aims has never been a central characteristic of British unionism, there are indications of the British Trades Union Councils’ (TUC) increasing alliances with other social movements and parties which encourage a broadening of labor movement purpose to emphasize solidarity around wider social justice interests.¹⁵

Like many unions elsewhere, British trade unions were faced with the onslaught of privatization, mass unemployment, and deindustrialization in the 1980s. These were compounded by pressures introduced by globalization and reluctance on the part of the Labour Government to reverse anti-trade union legislation. Traditional modes of regulation were eroded with the growth of the service economy, decentralisation of bargaining arrangements, flexibility, expansion of sub-contracting and the growth of smaller workplaces with increasingly diverse workforces. Union membership declined and it has proved difficult to organize in new sectors.

¹⁴ Ian Greer. Op Cit.

¹⁵ Jane Parker. “The TUC and civil alliance building: towards social movement unionism?” http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/irru/publications/recentconf/jp_airaanz_paper.doc.pdf (accessed September 1, 2008)



TUC involvement in civil alliances is generally conceived to be an evolving feature of recruitment, organising and political revival strategies. There are also alliances that had little links to union organising, but somehow, they nevertheless reflected intrinsic solidarity around certain interests. However, TUC seems to be wary of the risk of supporting or engaging in certain alliances due to its concern with the extent to which it can pursue its aims and control such alliances.

There are reports that civil alliances involving the TUC were usually instrumental in seeking to strengthen union revival strategies. Some examples also highlight TUC involvement in alliances that links worker/union empowerment and social/political justice protest goals. These include holding TGWU¹⁶ training courses to help migrant agricultural workers learn English as well as their work rights. They also get to know how to organize and join a union.

TUC has a small international development group which tends to engage with more internationally and development-oriented civil and sometimes government-backed alliances. This encouraged a growing number of alliances and campaigns which encompass a wide array of external parties. Likewise, TUC often supported or partially coordinated activities such as the multi-party Ethnical Trading Initiative, Make Poverty History

¹⁶ TGWU stands for Transport and General Workers' Union.

campaign, War on Want, political and welfare/anti-poverty movements. These were spearheaded by organizations/charities such as Oxfam, Labour Behind the Label, Amnesty International (AI) and One World Action. TUC's involvement in alliances is also rapidly developing around the issue of environmental/ climate change. However, some observers see this as occurring not on a sustained basis, but "sporadically from campaign to campaign." This reflects somehow the traditional pragmatism of the labor movement, according to observers.

There are examples nevertheless, of instances where funding for certain TUC/union-NGO alliances has enabled them to operate in longer terms, and these have implications for the unions' capacity to broaden union purpose. For instance there is the DfID¹⁷ funding to help raise global awareness on poverty and trade which encouraged the TUC's on-going involvement in the multi-party Make Poverty History protest campaign that emerged through its affiliates.

Philippines

In the Philippines, Social Movement Unionism has generally been attributed to trade unions identified with the Left. In fact, SMU in the Philippines did not evolve free of political undertones. Ernesto Arellano, outgoing President of the National Federation of Labor (NFL), points out in an interview that SMU in the country has been identified with the militant "left" unions as an offshoot of political unionism and "emerged after a brief honeymoon with national democratic unionism."

Scipes (1992) cites the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), the most radical and militant labor federation in the country, as a model of SMU in the Philippines.¹⁸ This is due to KMU's use of the *welgang bayan* (coordinated people's strike, also called "general strike" or "referendum of the streets") and alliances with other social classes and groups such as peasants, fisher

¹⁷ DfID is the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK, the Government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty

¹⁸ According to Waterman (2004), KMU's notion and practice of SMU is along the Moody's Class/Popular-Community formulation

folks, transport drivers, the unemployed and the urban poor, as well as with different sectoral organizations, to fight for demands that benefit the entire working class in the country. These groups formed political protests against particular labor, industrial and economic development policies, and political events. Observers note that KMU in fact depended on forming alliances with community groups to give it strength in waging campaigns and strikes. The alliance structure allowed connections to be made between the trade unions and political organizations. Thus, to support striking workers, unions turned to their alliances.

Some examples of *welgang bayan* activities conducted by KMU with its alliances are the following:



- During the eighties, there were at least 10 general strikes held:
 - o four were in protest of oil price increases
 - o three were focused on labor policies (i.e., strike laws, minimum wage laws)
 - o three were political strikes in protest of martial law, the murder of union leader Rolando Olalia in 1986, and the Mendiola massacre in 1987.
- By the early nineties, the *welgang bayan* were focused on specific economic concerns: wages and the energy

crisis due to the Gulf War which made oil importation very costly. KMU joined with other groups in an anti-poverty movement, protesting the disproportionate or uneven effects of the crisis on the workers. Observers note nevertheless, that this issue died down with the resolution of the crisis.

The Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) is another organization that practices Social Movement Unionism. APL has built itself as a “multi-form center,” drawing into its fold various forms of labor organizations, not just trade unions. The APL website indicates that in the future, APL sees itself as a singular union structure consolidated along industry and geographic lines.

According to Josua Mata, Secretary-General of APL, the nexus of the trade union with other social movements can be recognized through class-based organizing. APL organizes sectors outside the traditional mantle of union representation (e.g., urban poor communities, transport groups, cooperatives, and the informal economy). Thus, while other confederations have been experiencing decline, APL’s membership has been on the rise due to the influx of members from the informal economy. In fact, while trade unions comprised two-thirds of APL’s membership 10 years ago, now about 70% of all members are informal workers (i.e., urban poor and transport workers). Mata, however, stresses that the reason for SMU’s survival is the existence of a “solidarity fund” partly funded by union dues since organizing and education activities in non-traditional sectors require substantial resources.

As part of its strategy on SMU electoral politics, the APL co-founded AKBAYAN, a working people’s party that participates in regular elections through the party-list system for seats in the House of Representatives. But in the 2007 elections, AKBAYAN snatched only a single seat—a far cry from the three seats it won in the previous election.

Apart from the KMU and the APL, other labor organizations which embraced the Class/Popular-Community notion of SMU are the National Federation of Labor (NFL), the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), and to a certain extent, the Trade Union Congress of the

Philippines (TUCP). Others (e.g., unions affiliated with UNI-APRO) also claim to be doing the same, albeit perhaps on a different angle.

What similarities and differences in the practice of SMU can we extract from the few samples presented?

There are noticeable similarities in the Social Movement Unionism experience of these countries, such as the following:

1. Unions mostly trade union centers (e.g. COSATU, TUC, KMU and APL), initiated the connections with allies or formation of alliances. Federations can also make these connections.
2. The alliances were composed of various groups including community organizations like in the case of the Philippines
3. Trade union solidarity with these networks centered around issues which can be both local and national. An example of a local issue is the organization of workers in MNCs in Africa which led COSATU to link with unions in the mother countries of these MNCs. Examples of national issues are campaigns or protests against national policies that affected workers' interests (e.g. minimum wage laws – in the case of the Philippines, privatization in Germany and Great Britain, anti-union legislation for TUC and KMU, and apartheid for COSATU African unions).

The differences noted are the following:

1. The joining of African unions with the anti-apartheid movement which has no parallel in the other country experiences discussed in this handbook
2. The sustained use of alliances. Some had continuous, sustained relationship with their alliances; others were mostly on an event basis.

3. Expanding the organization of sectors outside the traditional mantle of union representation – as in the case of APL

What were the outcomes of these SMU ventures?

In some of the instances provided by the country experiences, SMU helped revitalize the trade union movement. To a great extent, alliances formed with SMU contributed significantly toward the strengthening of the position of the various labor movements with regard to the issues they were pushing forward, or supporting.

It is time to discuss the SMU perceptions of union respondents in the UP-SOLAIR study.

Have Philippine unions heard about SMU?

Our survey shows that a considerable number (i.e., one half of respondents) have not even heard about it. Eleven (78.6%) of the federation leaders have heard about SMU compared to less than half or 44.8% (13 out of 29) of the independents, and 44.3% (27 out of 61) of the affiliated unions. The figures indicate that many local unionists have no orientation about SMU and what it hopes to attain, or that the federation leaders did not cascade their knowledge about this matter to their locals. This implies the need to include the topic of SMU in the unions' workers' education programs, or in a bigger forum organized for this purpose.

What do Philippine unions understand about SMU?

Those who ventured some answer stated various conceptualizations about SMU that reflect what has already been discussed, both in theory and practice. They include the following:

- It is no longer confined to specific area of workplace but must have an avenue for expression.
- Involved struggles in the enterprise level and political arena to establish a new order.
- Alliance and cooperation with civil society involving rank-and-file in organizing.
- Strategy or organizing all types of workers to transform social and power relations.
- SMU is for social change and not just confined to the enterprise level.
- Addresses social needs both within and beyond the workplace.
- Ascendance of worker's power and control over the rest of society.
- Militant, mass-based; must not be service-oriented.
- "Contradiction in terms" - may strengthen civil society but weaken unions – this may have come from a non-believer of SMU, or someone who had negative experiences with alliances.

An integrated concept of SMU as perceived by respondents can mean the following:

- SMU can be a strategy for social change to transform social and power relations in society, not just in the workplace since it addresses the social needs of people both within and outside the workplace. It also involves alliances and cooperation with civil society. The struggles take place both in the enterprise level and the political arena to establish a new order.



If alliances are important in SMU, do Philippine unions make such alliances?

Alliances are important because they provide strong resource support for whatever unions are working on. They are therefore considered key elements in pursuing SMU.

Fig. 2 shows that types and nature of alliances mentioned by the UP SOLAIR survey respondents are varied. However, the alliances entered into are more locally orientated. In fact, study results indicate the following:

- That trade unions have very limited partnership or alliances beyond the union/federation. Of the total engagements undertaken by the respondents at any given time, those with non-trade union groups comprised only between 1% and 20%.
- These engagements are mostly issue-based alliances with various groups limited to campaigns and rallies against wage increases, human rights abuse, sexual harassment, and discrimination; anti-GMA (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) protests; democracy and governance concerns; and social reforms and other socio-political issues. Project-based engagements are mostly on labor education, gender training, and cooperatives.

- Overall, the responses suggest that trade unions typically associate within their own sector because this is where they derive the most benefits.

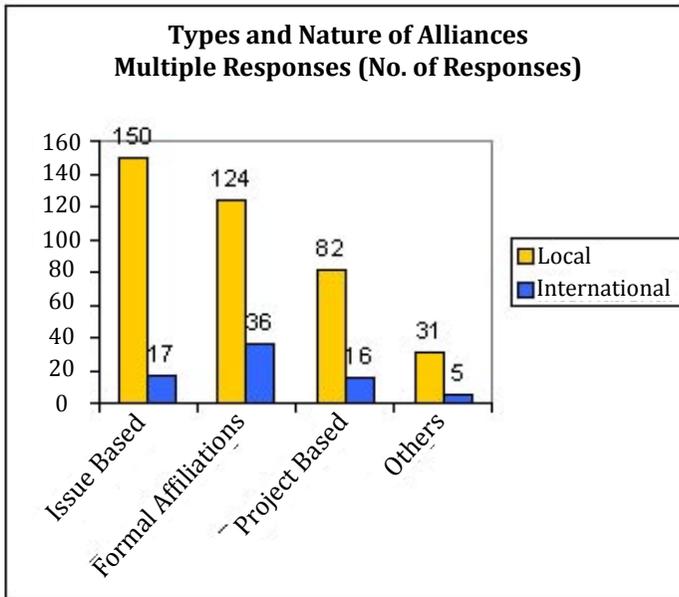


Figure 2. Types and Nature of Alliances Used by Philippine Unions

The details regarding these alliances are seen in Table 3

Group	Nature of Alliance			
	Issue-based	Formal affiliation	Project-based	Others
Other trade union groups/ federations	26	62	13	3
Women's groups	20	14	9	4
NGOs	14	11	15	3
Political Organizations	18	15	8	5
Church	17	4	8	5
Human Rights groups	19	3	8	2
Environmental groups	15	6	8	3
Academe	15	6	11	3
Others (pls. specify)	6	3	2	3
INTERNATIONAL				
Foreign Trade Union Groups	14	33	14	4
Others (pls. specify)	3	3	2	1

What alliances are perceived to help Philippine unions attain their aims?

- Local alliances with federations or national unions are in the lead, followed by regional/ international networks (Fig. 3).
- A few networked with political parties and the academe, particularly the School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SOLAIR) of the University of the Philippines (UP).

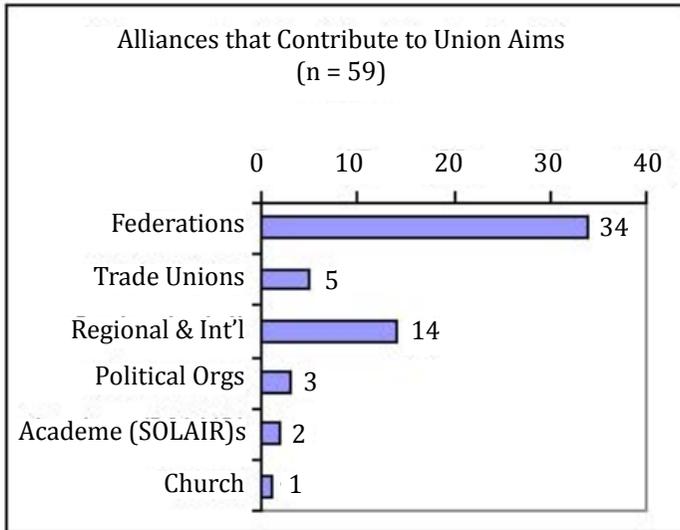


Figure 3. Helpful Alliances

When were these alliances used?

Of 40 informants who responded, predominant is use of federation support in aspects such as:

- collective bargaining negotiations
- labor education,
- advocacy and training
- recruitment support
- organizing
- strikes
- medical missions, and
- assistance in political campaigns for labor demands and issues.

What factors contribute to the success of these alliances?

Top four success factors both in the country and outside according to study respondents are (Fig. 4):

1. Shared goals and forms of labor action
2. Willingness to act by all unions involved
3. Equal representation/democratic participation
4. Availability of resources

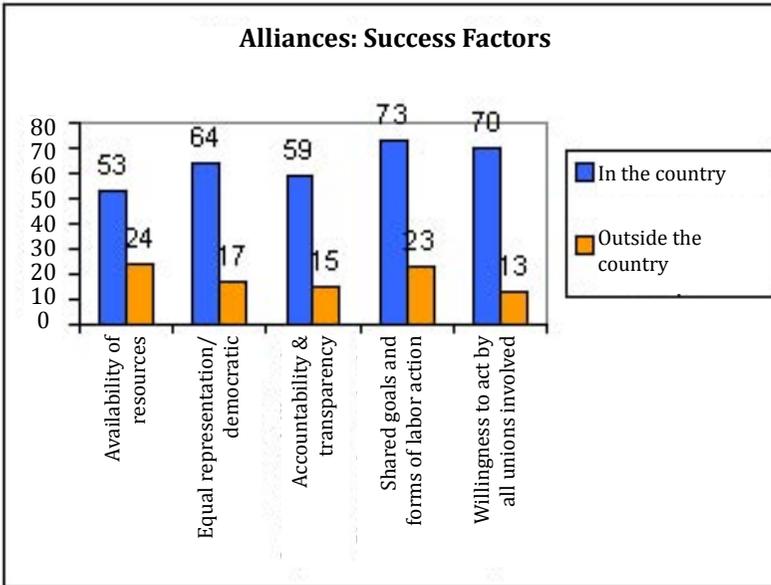


Figure 4. Success Factors of Alliances (in Percent)

How effective are Philippine unions these days?

Earlier portions of this handbook discussed how Philippine unions are doing with regard to their traditional functions of organizing, collective bargaining and others. As also discussed, they used alliances to help them discharge their functions.

Let us look at how unions view their effectiveness in achieving their aims. In our survey, unionists rated the effectiveness of Philippine unions and their own union on a scale of 1 to 10. Percentage of raters per category are seen below (Fig. 5 and 6):

- The graphs show that while only 19% view highly the effectiveness of Philippine unions (7% to 10%), more than half of the respondents reflected a high regard for the achievements of their unions.

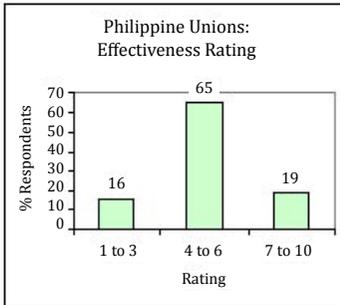


Figure 5. Effectiveness of Philippine Unions

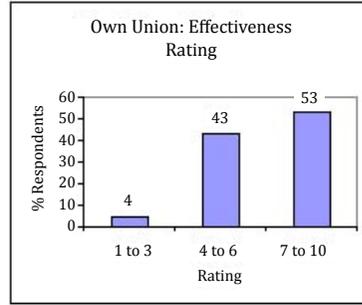


Figure 6. Effectiveness of Own Union

Given the effectiveness of Philippine labor movement to achieve its mission and confront pressing issues, should it continue its present course?

Unions should realize that issues for workers' struggle have taken new forms and the arena for dealing with these issues has gone beyond national boundaries. Hence they need to shift strategy and adopt new modes of operation. As it is now, unions in the country are generally more focused on the servicing model¹⁹ (although majority of the respondents in our survey used both). While there is nothing wrong with utilizing this model, because indeed the workers' needs should be serviced, the current situation also demands a strategy that would help avert union membership decline. Given the trade union situation in the country, such would require a balanced or combined use of both the organizing and servicing models, although the situation would require more focus on the organizing model. It would likewise mean:

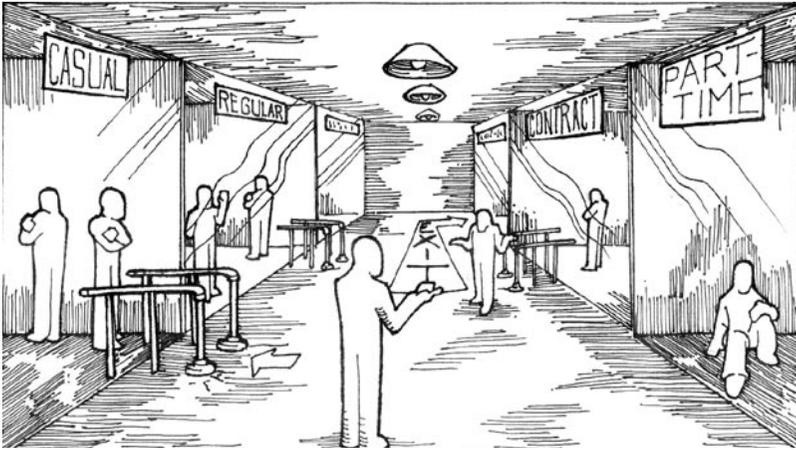
¹⁹ The servicing model is "an approach whereby unions aim to satisfy members' demands for resolving grievances and securing benefits through methods other than direct grassroots-oriented pressure on employers." Source: Wikipedia. "Service model." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_model (accessed December 14, 2008).

- having more meaningful and lasting alliances, and coalitions with other organizations and global networks to strengthen the union in its struggle to confront the effects of transnationalization of capital, and
- going beyond the confines of traditional trade union structures, and change in leadership, if there are problems with the current leadership
- embracing issues that are broader --- social, economic and political issues that go beyond collective bargaining and workplace issues
- intensification of workers' education activities for both union leaders and rank and file members

What situations point to the need for a shift in union strategy?

As indicated in the previous chapter:

1. Employer adjustment measures to combat effects of cutthroat competition include adoption of tactics to render the union helpless, or outright ban on the entry of unions in the workplace. These have been going on for decades but the activities devoted to anti-union activities are intensifying.
2. As a result, organizing workers has become more and more difficult, and is taking considerable time and resources. Organizing tactics used which are often or mostly localized, are also quite ineffective, given the globalized unification of capital.
3. Meanwhile, there is growing number of marginalized workers in the informal sector --- home workers (a great number of which are women) or those in small sweatshops who need a stronger force to advance their interests. They may have their own organizations, but they may not be



very effective if they do this by themselves. This is where union leadership in coalitions comes in.

4. Forging collective bargaining agreements at the enterprise level is becoming rare in a considerable number of unionized establishments. Moreover, workers covered by CBAs are declining because of employer resistance and also because of the changes in the structure of the labor force.
5. Some of those who are lucky to be covered by CBAs cannot rely on their local or localized union to advance their interests. Many CBA provisions simply indicate only the legal provisions – which the unions need not bargain for since they are already granted by law.
6. With the current world-wide depression, many are joining the ranks of the underemployed, the unemployed and unpaid workers in the informal sector. Some opt for overseas employment, although it is getting difficult to do so because of economic conditions. These workers generally constitute the bulk of exploited and helpless workers which are traditionally outside the scope of Philippine unions.

7. With the economic and financial meltdown, women are saddled with ever increasing responsibilities to keep the family intact. Those who are covered by collective bargaining contracts may be lucky, but since the union leadership is still predominantly male, their practical and strategic gender needs²⁰ are often neglected in the CBAs. Work-life balance programs²¹ are still confined to maternity and other leaves. Negotiations to advance women-friendly provisions in the CBA are often compromised as such provisions are traded with other provisions that are perceived to be of priority to the general union membership.

Can we say that these are also the reasons for unions to embrace SMU?

They may form the main reasons why unions should consider embracing SMU. The more pressing reason is that unions need the assistance of other sectors to help them build a bigger base for organizing and for performing their functions. In turn, unions can engage in collaborative efforts with others to bring about better quality of life for the populace.

²⁰ Practical gender needs relate to the fulfillment of women's productive, reproductive and community managing roles and responsibilities. These are the needs women identify that do not challenge their socially accepted roles. They include basic living commodities such as shelter, employment and food. Practical gender needs are related to existing gender roles. In contrast, strategic gender interests are equality needs. They challenge women's traditional roles and begin with the assumption that women are subordinate to men as a consequence of social and institutions that discriminate against women

²¹ Work-life balance programs are those that will help employees cope with simultaneous demands of work and family. Included are: (1) Work time flexibility-flexitime or compressed work week; (2) Dependant care initiatives such as: emergency child-care, emergency eldercare, financial assistance for child care expenses, workplace child-care, and information and referral service ; (3) Leaves and benefits -flexible benefits; leave for personal reasons; maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, sick leave, vacation leave; and (4) Work-life stress management- wellness/ health promotion

Going back to our survey results, what are the proposed alternatives, framework or approaches forwarded by unionists?

From Fig. 7, one can note the following suggestions from the respondents:

- Capability building through education/ training, unity of unions and organization of more workers were the leading proposals made by those who responded to the query
- Joining other sectors was the alternative proposed by a few of the survey respondents.

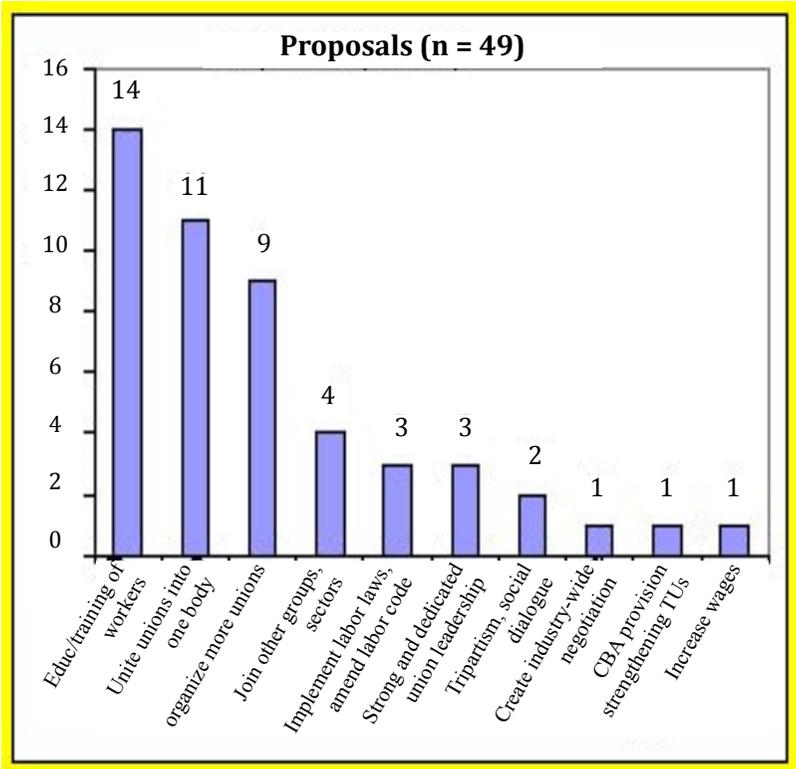


Figure 7. Proposed Alternatives by Number of Responses

Can SMU energize the Philippine labor movement?

In the UP-SOLAIR study, a considerable number of union respondents (47 or 43.1%) believe that it would to a great extent, and only a few (9 or 8.3 %) do not believe so (Fig. 8).

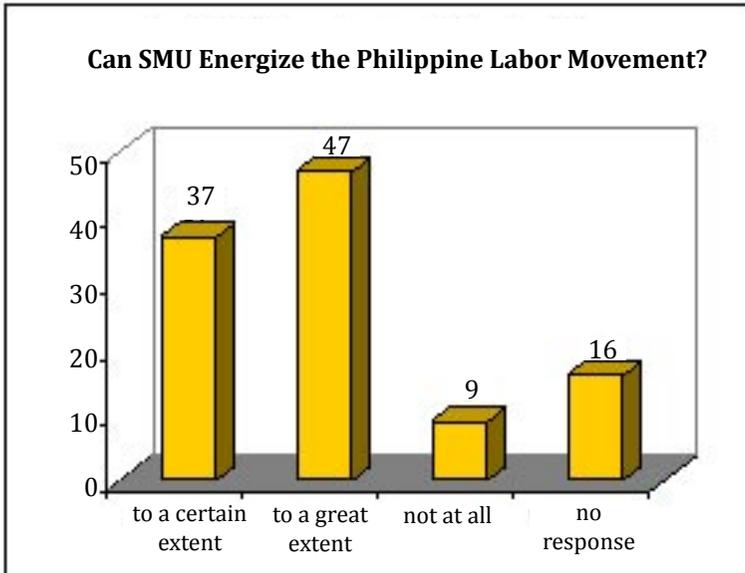


Figure 8. On Whether SMU Can Energize the Philippine Labor Movement

Why do Respondents say that SMU can or cannot energize unions?

Varied reasons are forwarded by unionist regarding the extent to which SMU can help revitalize Philippine unions:

A. To a great extent because of the need to:

- increase bargaining powers of unions,
- increase membership
- provide more services
- secure more jobs
- develop mutual self-help

- organize the unorganized,
- inspire commitment and role modeling
- show that workers are the leading force in society
- complement worker's struggle
- promote international linkage
- increase society's awareness of unions, and
- unite all sectors into one voice and one goal

B. To a certain extent due to:

- lack of readiness on the part of unions to accept new concepts that are unfamiliar to them for fear of backlash from government

C. Don't believe so since:

- There are conflicting goals and strategies and lack of cooperation among unions.
- Some unions are "dummies of government"

What are the possibilities of conducting SMU beyond the workplace?

Based on study results, uncertainty seems to predominate over this issue (12% not sure, plus 52% maybe- see Fig. 9):

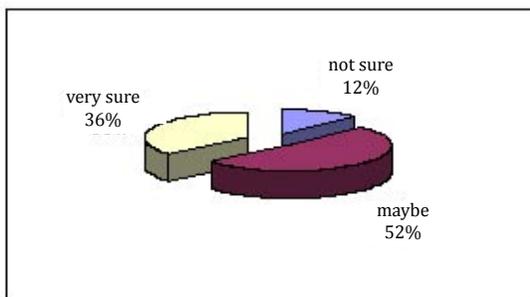


Figure 9. On Whether SMU Can Be Conducted Beyond the Workplace

What are the benefits of shifting to Social Movement Unionism?

1. Unions can learn about the conditions of similarly situated organizations like them who are advancing workers' rights and interests.
2. Such leads to a broadening of perspectives for both the unions and their networks of influence. They get to understand each others' concerns.
3. Forging strategic coalitions with other organizations can help secure the likelihood of success of trade union actions. Moreover, it provides opportunities and spaces for unions to articulate to a broader sector --- workers' conditions and concerns. Learning through exchange of information, networking and coalition-building, new modes of mobilization, media exposure, and access to new resources and instruments of power are also acquired through coalition-building.
4. It may therefore avert union decline and revitalize unions if they can count on their allies to help them push forth their labor agenda.
5. It may avert union decline because unions can organize more workers with the help of their alliances. These include groups of workers who are traditionally excluded from unionized jobs.
6. A broader organization composed of alliances working on mutually beneficial issues can better beat the odds against them. Because of globalization, union work must go beyond the workplace in order to attain effective labor control or influence work processes, investments, wage determination mechanisms and approaches, etc. It does not mean however, the abandonment of collective bargaining and other usual workplace undertakings of unions.

7. Forging partnerships to enlarge the bargaining agenda to include such areas as equitable pay for men and women, training and development, employment security and others can revitalize unions. In SMU, union officials engage in “willful institution building,” as they bring together an expanded scope of influence through joint programs that extend beyond a specific firm or sector.

8. Partnerships promote union revitalization because they reach out beyond the community of union members to work together on organizing drives, community coalitions, or political actions. These benefit workers who are not covered by collective bargaining contracts, and at the same time, extend the reach and relevance of collective bargaining and union influence. They protect workers from unilateral acts by management such as layoffs, downsizing, outsourcing, etc., if not through collective bargaining, through passage of relevant laws or demanding that the government institutes programs to address worker concerns. They also advance a policy agenda that addresses social justice issues.

If SMU can help avert union decline and revitalize Philippine unions, what factors must be considered?

A review of various reports indicates the following factors that need to be considered:

1. As discussed in the previous chapter, a broadening of the trade union identity and purpose is needed where both the scope of representation and union function are extended.

2. A fragmented system of bargaining that makes representation biased towards immediate workplace issues may no longer be helpful under the present circumstances.

3. There should be shifts in the current union structure because --- how will SMU fare if power is still located at the center?
4. Heavy entrenchment in the rice and fish servicing model coupled with low priority in organizing new members do not help advance the labor movement.
5. Culture change is essential to resist neo-liberalism.²² The traditional trade union culture of isolation from other sectors as it carries out its servicing role must be changed to allow coalitions with strategic partners who can help unions combat negative forces or consequences of neo-liberalization.

Transforming to Social Movement Unionism is indeed a challenge because of the need for a radical shift in traditional trade unionism to include:

- Attitude change among union leaders
- Broadening of perspectives
- Moving away from traditional structures and issues
- Learning to work together with networks and coalitions

Can Philippine unions and unionists do it?

- Ironically, even if unity among unions on issues of mutual concern is a recurring problem, there are instances in

²² Neo-liberalism is a set of economic policies with five main points, according to Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo García: (1) Rule of the market- Liberating “free” enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government; (2) Cutting public expenditure for social services like education and health care, reducing safety net for the poor, and even maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply -- in the name of reducing government’s role; (3) Deregulation - reduced government regulation of everything that could diminish profits; (4) Privatization; and (5) Eliminating the concept of “public good” or “community” and replacing it with individual responsibility- (“What is Neo-liberalism: A brief Definition.” In <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/econ101/neoliberalDefined.html>- accessed January 14, 2009)

Philippine history where labor joined or formed coalitions with various groups to push through some issue. But often, building alliances has not been of a sustained nature.



- Nevertheless, there are indications from the UP SOLAIR study that unions in the Philippines are open to change, which indicate that they may want to try SMU despite the odds. Evidences can be cited from the respondents' own realization of:
 - o The need for an alternative approach, specifically, joining other sectors
 - o The need to unite all sectors into one voice and one goal
 - o The need to complement workers' struggles which could be achieved through Social Movement Unionism

Moreover, from the focused group discussions that were done in the course of the study, union leaders in attendance bewailed the negative effects of the economic environment on unionism, and articulated their willingness to try alternative approaches, or at least effect a win-win situation with employers.

The odds are great because the unions themselves cannot unite into one voice. A glaring example is the demand for minimum wage increase. This led one leader to suggest (maybe

jokingly) that unions can unite on one thing: the holding of the labor day on May 1st, not just any date specified by the President of the Philippines who tends to change holiday dates and move them nearer Saturdays or Sundays (in order to have more vacations days -often termed as “holiday economics”). Anyhow, since many unions especially at the national or federation level are already well into institution building and are extending their issues or concerns outside the workplace, these unions can serve as a role model for others to follow.

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