



AGHAM

Samahan ng Nagtataguyod ng Agham at Teknolohiya para sa Sambayanan
(Advocates of Science and Technology for the People)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

May 14, 2010

Decision to industrialize leads to advances in S&T and not the other way around

This is a response to Mr. Luz's commentary entitled, "Agham," printed last May 8, 2010, where he asserts that the country's low levels of science and math achievement is the culprit behind our inability to develop and maintain a significant industrial base.

We wish to clarify two points. First, that the partylist endorsed by Luz is a different entity from our organization, AGHAM (Samahan ng Nagtataguyod ng Agham at Teknolohiya para sa Sambayanan). Founded way before in 1998, we are a volunteer organization of science and technology (S&T) professionals advocating the redirection of S&T for the benefit of the Filipino people. We have graced the pages and frontpages of newspapers for our contributions to S&T advocacy such as the time when we helped compute the (amount) refund of MERALCO. We think this distinction needs to be emphasized as Luz was endorsing a recently-established partylist of the same name in his piece.

In addition to clarifying these "name issues", we wish to engage Luz's point on the relation of S&T development and industrialization. While the problem of underachievement in science and math should be addressed, we assert that resolving this will not necessarily lead to the development of an industrial base. This is because the building of industries for local needs stems from a government's resolve and political will to do so.

Once a country decides to industrialize, we believe that steps toward the improvement of science and technology (which includes research and education funding increases) will follow, and not the other way around, as he implies. Sadly, past and present governments have not lifted a foot towards genuine industrialization: where the creation of basic and nationally-owned industries primarily oriented towards providing local needs (such as power, pharmaceuticals, steel, to name a few) will enable the country to build medium to light industries and establish a self-reliant, stable and progressive economy.

Right now, basic industries are practically absent. Government-owned industries, such as the power sector, are continuously being privatized. To provide for our needs, the government imports goods. To provide jobs, it invites foreign-owned companies like mining firms to extract our resources or other service-oriented, non-industrial "industries" like call centers.

Contrary to what Luz says, this country does not lack S&T professionals who can manage industries. In fact, we have a lot of professionals who are out of S&T-related jobs simply due to the lack of industries to absorb them. Brain drain is very rampant; the few science professionals remaining in the country are either teaching in universities or are employed in support research, marketing, or quality assurance.

We believe that the lack of government resolve to implement genuine industrialization and agrarian reform—two inseparable ingredients for progress—is to blame for our stunted state of S&T. In the absence of a real industrialization program, even a ten-fold increase in the DOST budget will do little to create national industries, employment opportunities after college, and tangible progress for the people's welfare.

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