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If there is an anathema to the spirit of EDSA Dos, it is ironically in the person of the single biggest beneficiary of EDSA herself – Gloria. While EDSA represented for most a cry for change to achieve equity and good governance, for Gloria, it was merely the start of a long presidential campaign. She has become the candidate she has always been – and eagerly so. We – as the genuine architects of EDSA Dos – have to remind

her then that, with her bankrupt economic policies and an equally bankrupt style of politics, she is not far away from the fate of her corrupt predecessor. In the final analysis, it was not the Supreme Court that gave Gloria the mantle of authority; it was the toiling Filipino masses. Her constitutional mandate can just as easily be eroded as it was easily given her.

Gloria should listen closely to what we have to say about the disheveled state of the nation. Perhaps she should listen and unburden herself of so much neo-liberal rubbish and understand this: *it is equitable distribution and redistributive growth that matter*. It is asset reform and progressive taxation rather than pump priming through relentless borrowing. It is sustainable development rather than the neo-liberal quick fix. It is good governance and the institutionalization of people power rather than traditional politics. It is nothing short of social transformation!

**TIGILAN ANG PAMUMULITIKA AT OPORTUNISMO!  
LABANAN ANG PANGHIHIMASOK NG MGA  
AMERIKANO!  
IBASURA ANG KONTRA-MAMAMAYANG  
PATAKARANG PANG-EKONOMIYA!**

**Alyansa** ♦ Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) ♦ Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG) ♦ Confederation of Independent Unions in the Public Sector (CIU) ♦ Manggagawang Kababaihang Mithi ay Paglaya (MAKALAYA) ♦ Movement for the Advancement of Student Power (MASP) ♦ Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan (PKSK)

# THE DISHEVELED STATE OF GLORIA

A Joint Statement on the State of the Nation Address

22 July 2002



**Numbers don't lie.** On July 22, as she delivers her second State of the Nation Address (SONA), Gloria Arroyo, the economist-turned-president-by-sheer-luck, will surely brag. First, she will refresh our memory on what mess she inherited from her corrupt predecessor, then she will review the targets she has set in her last SONA, then she will proceed to brag about the nice round figures that her government was able to

deliver for the past 1 year and 8 months. Of course, these are figures her lieutenants have so fastidiously prepared to fit into a speech extolling the rosy state of the economy under Ate Glo's watch – an economy upon which a “strong republic” is to be built. This is the “strong republic” she hopes to lord over beyond 2004, if she bags a fresh presidential mandate.

The economic numbers indeed are there, and they may be as verifiable as other figures in any data sheet. In the first quarter, the GNP grew by 4.9% and the GDP by 3.8%. Portfolio investments are said to have increased by 217% from last year and direct foreign investments rose by 101%. Inflation and interest rates are low and the peso is stable relative to the dollar. Her housing czar boasted recently that the government exceeded the SONA target last year by 113% in providing

**ALYANSA APL CIU BISIG MAKALAYA MASP PKSK**

security of tenure to poor dwellers. An additional 1,513 barangays nationwide are now energized and have electricity. The agriculture sector boasted of almost a million new jobs. Fantastic.

But can these seemingly simple figures really stand the scrutiny of simple questions? If the GNP and the GDP grew, why did the number of poor families increase as

well? Where is this growth the president is bragging about? Where is it happening? Who can feel this growth? Or, better yet, who benefits from this growth? Certainly not the 40% of Filipinos who now live in poverty.

*Numbers don't lie, really.* And so we might as well pose the numbers that Gloria will not talk about in her SONA. Aside from the poverty incidence that swelled from 33% to 40%, the SONA should cite the highest unemployment rate since 1996 that now beset the nation. In concrete terms, this translates to about 4.8 million people without work – the highest in Southeast Asia. The ranks of the underemployed now reached 6 million. If the president knows her economics well, a level of unemployment this high suggests an equally high level of desperation in the labor force; people latching on to jobs that do not pay enough and do not offer enough benefits and security for lack of better options. As if to clinch the cheerless scenario, the government already reached a staggering 83% of its target deficit for 2002 in the first 5 months of the year. This rising deficit — mainly due to low tax collection and higher government spending and borrowings — spells disaster for the already inadequate budget intended for basic social services.

More telling stories are behind the numbers. Of the investments that came in, more than 80% have been poured into Metro Manila and Central Luzon, while the rest of the country vied for the measly 18%. The new jobs that absorb our labor are seriously unsustainable as these are mostly in the service sectors, especially with the entry of multinational call centers that attract our young workers. These trends point mainly to a serious deceleration in production and an increasing insecurity for the working people. The market rules, yes, but for whom? Despite

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the bleakness, Gloria remains obstinate in insisting that neo-liberal economics is good economics.

Politically, we are just as bankrupt. We have been promised “good governance,” a “high moral standard in government” and a “new brand of politics.” After almost two years, we find ourselves as far away from these lofty goals as we were before. It is as if EDSA Dos did not happen. Instead of political reforms, we now know of political accommodation. Instead of justice, we are given the hollow slogan of “a healing presidency” where only the lacerated egos of the dispossessed elite are healed while the backs of the poor and economic exclusion

Gloria who charisma but not reinvented herself as EDSA Dos and EDSA she does not seem to the two EDSAs as her obviously refers to the and turncoats – the spurned – whom she has The mandate of EDSA

of corruption and the corrupt – to exorcise the ghosts of Erap — has been set aside for the more urgent agenda of consolidating Gloria’s political network of supporters come 2004. Traditional politics is never outdated.

The political bankruptcy of Gloria’s government was further exposed when the Senate scuffle happened in June. Keenly aware of the Gloria’s political insecurity, the wheeling-and-dealing *trapos* knew that Gloria would deftly bend backwards to appease her own kind. After all, they knew that the “president of Edsa Dos and Edsa Tres” can surely play the game of politicians of every possible political color. A “new brand of politics”? Think again.

But perhaps the crowning legacy of Gloria and her government is bringing back the country to the fetters of US colonialism. While a policy of deferment is concocted to camouflage the neo-liberal color of her economic policies, she shamelessly galloped with the US-led anti-terrorism crusade as the logic of the Balikatan exercises. She went on to define the nation’s foreign policy as an adjunct to the US-led global war. Guingona only knew too well how serious Gloria can be with foreign policy, especially if such policy can ensure the coveted US support in 2004.

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admits to be deficient in wanting in intellect has “the president of both Tres.” Unfortunately, speak of the masses of constituents. She political opportunists types that EDSA Dos been courting of late.

Dos to rid government