

Rising chorus of dissent

Written by John Hsieh
Friday, 21 March 2014 09:14

In August last year, the Citizen 1985 group sang Do you hear the people sing? from the musical Les Miserables for late army corporal Hung Chung-chiu (洪仲丘) and that same song is now being sung by students in Taipei protesting the cross-strait service trade agreement.

Student demonstrators and other activists occupying the Legislative Yuan in Taipei chanted: "Reject the service trade pact, reopen the negotiations, defend our democracy," while thousands of their supporters surrounded the legislature to add their voices to the protest. All these voices calling out in unison are very touching.

So what is the service trade pact and why are so many Taipei students opposed to it? President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) government has said that the agreement will help the nation's economy and enable Taiwanese to make more money from China. What Ma is keeping under wraps is that the trade deal also opens a door for China to pour workers and capital into Taiwan. With those funds, Chinese enterprises and businesspeople will be able to easily buy out Taiwanese companies and eliminate any competition, while the influx of Chinese workers will take over local mom-and-pop businesses and seize job opportunities.

"In the future, Taiwanese small and medium-sized enterprises will face challenges from competition with [Chinese-invested] companies that have abundant capital and use vertically integrated business models. It will also threaten the survival of office workers, farmers, blue-collar workers and businesspeople," an academic assessment said.

Since Ma first assumed the presidency in 2008, he has opened up the nation to Chinese people, money, trade, cargo and services. As a result, Taiwanese are meant to be turning larger profits and their standard of living improving considerably. However, in reality, since the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) was implemented, Taiwan's economy has been getting steadily worse. Only big bosses like Hon Hai Precision Industry Co chairman Terry Gou (郭台銘) or HTC Corp chairwoman Cher Wang (王雪紅) have profited from this, not ordinary individuals.

The situation is such that college graduates can look forward to a salary of only NT\$22,000, which is about US\$700 a month. How can they make a living and raise a family with such a low income? The service pact would make things even worse, as graduates would also have to face a flood of cheap Chinese labor. If this comes about, what kind of future is there for

Rising chorus of dissent

Written by John Hsieh
Friday, 21 March 2014 09:14

Taiwanese students?

What students need is a fair environment in which they can grow and prosper equally. They need to stand up and fight for their future before it is too late, before Ma misleads Taiwan onto a doomed route like Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, before the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) funnels more Chinese into the country to turn it over to China like Crimea to Russia. Taiwanese must stand up and say “no.” The hundreds of student protesters and their supporters are heroes, let us sing along with them and add our voices to theirs.

John Hsieh

Hayward, California

Source: [Taipei Times - Letter 2014/03/21](#)