

Protesters have no ground to stand on

Written by Chi Chun-chieh 齊君

Saturday, 29 April 2017 05:23

I am a public-school teacher and I will retire within the next 10 years. Regardless of which version of the pension reform act is passed, my pension is certain to shrink. Despite this, I give my full support to the ongoing effort to reform a pension system that violates the principle of intergenerational justice, in particular the part that is aimed at military personnel, civil servants and public-school teachers.

A friend of mine 10 years my senior retired a few years ago. Not long after, we were making an appointment to meet, but he said it would have to be a bit later, because he had to first go and take care of something "that I feel a bit uncomfortable talking about."

He was going to the bank to open the special savings account that would allow him to receive the preferential 18 percent interest rate on part of his savings.

This friend of mine is the kind of person who practices what he preaches, who is concerned for society and his friends. He is doing fine financially, but since this is the government policy in place, and although it made him feel uneasy, he still had to take advantage of the privilege, which would give him another NT\$20,000 each month.

This is human nature, and there is no reason for us to criticize any individual who is taking advantage of the program. However, it is absolutely necessary that we discuss and criticize this kind of policy.

It is an indisputable fact that if the pension system is not reformed, it would create insurmountable fiscal problems before long. Even more important, if those of us who belong to my generation, and in particular military personnel, civil servants and public-school teachers of my generation, continue to take advantage of this generous pension, the cost will have to be shouldered by today's young generation.

This is a source of intergenerational injustice, and this is the reason that some young public-school teachers are standing up, expressing their support for reform and voicing their opinions about the teachers' organizations that are engaged in the anti-reform campaign.

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A few days ago, as the legislature planned to review the reform bill at a committee meeting, legislators and others intending to participate in the meeting were forcefully and violently stopped from doing so by anti-reform groups.

Some of the protesters and their organizations were clearly in it for their own selfish interest, and a while back, they even referred to themselves as the “800 Heroes” — after a group of soldiers who resisted the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937 — as they were protesting outside the Legislative Yuan.

Despite the illustrious name, they did not gather more than a couple of hundred protesters and failed miserably at winning public support.

Anti-reform groups keep repeating the principle of legitimate expectation, but to be honest, it is just a matter of not caring one iota about national finances or intergenerational justice, while refusing to accommodate even the smallest compromise on their own interests.

However, the highest responsibility for a government is to live up to and protect the legitimate expectations of the nation’s citizenry as a whole and not just the expectations of a small clique.

And another thing: The anti-reform protesters’ loud slogan about being opposed to vilification is becoming more laughable by the day.

Look at these so-called “800 Heroes” and the violence that occurred outside the Legislative Yuan: They are doing a pretty good job of vilifying themselves, and they still have the stomach to tell other people not to vilify them.

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