

Labor groups stage 'Autumn Struggle'

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 10 November 2014 07:58 -



Protesters in front of the National Development Council in Taipei yesterday burn banners representing policies and practices that are unfavorable to workers, farmers and students.

Photo: Chen Chih-chu, Taipei Times

After convening at three rallies held in different locations across Taipei, nearly 1,000 protesters carrying flags and banners swarmed the MRT yesterday to participate in the Autumn Struggle (秋鬥), an annual protest march organized by labor groups, congregating in Ximending (西門町) before marching on to protest in front of the National Development Council.

The train ride was included as part of the protest as a critique against the “capitalist values” the MRT represents, protest organizers said, adding that although most might see the trains as a symbol of urban development, they also function as a “transportation belt” to “send overworked employees into the hands of their employers every day.”

As the three processions moved through the streets in rainy weather, protesters shouted slogans including “We want economic democracy with the workers in charge” and “Citizens take a left turn, return the nation to the people” over the rhythmic beat of makeshift drums made from empty water barrels.

The annual event, first held in 1993 by the Committee for Action on Labor Legislation and later by its successor movement Raging Citizens Act Now, focuses on different labor rights-related themes each year, and acts as a rallying call for many activist groups to express their outrage toward government policies that they say are skewed toward capitalists and large corporations.

This year, organizers accused the newly formed National Development Council of “single-minded pursuit of economic development” and its proposal to establish free economic

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pilot zones — special territories with reduced tariffs and other trade incentives — which the organizers say would exacerbate economic inequality and increase unjust cases of land seizures.

The initial three rallies, which started at noon, invited participation from more than 60 activist groups to participate according to three themes: land rights or movements against forced expropriation projects; labor rights advocates; and student groups campaigning against the privatization of higher education.

Scuffles with police occurred when land rights activists attempted to enter the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) headquarters to protest what they say is the party's inaction in protecting people against land expropriation projects, with the protesters leaving banners that labeled the party "The Regressive Party" before leaving.

The protesters also gathered in front of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Taipei mayoral candidate Sean Lien's (連戰) campaign headquarters, bestowing on him a large inscribed placard that read: "[For your] contribution to luxury mansions," a sarcastic reference to Lien's residence in The Palace (故宮) — the most expensive piece of real-estate in Taiwan — as well as his alleged connections with wealthy corporations.

The three processions gathered at the Ximending MRT station at about 3pm, crowding the platforms before streaming out to attend a joint demonstration outside.

The day's events ended with the activists marching to protest in front of the National Development Council while carrying a large fake turd over their heads — an allusion to President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) vow to create a "golden decade (黃金十年)" of economic development, which in Mandarin, is pronounced similarly to "golden year of the turd (黃金屎)."

Source: [Taipei Times - 2014/11/10](#)