

Dacyon Resigns!

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BONTOC. After weeks of protests against the college administration, the head of the only state college in the province finally stepped down, as she finally issued her letter of resignation as college president at around 3:26 p.m. of July 1, 2011 at the Mountain Province State Polytechnic College (MPSPC) Bontoc Campus.

It isn't unknown in the Bontoc community that a series of protests have been launched by students since the opening of classes for the current semester. Problems on lack of books in the library, laboratory equipment, demands for transparency, and calls for the resignation of College President Nieves Dacyon and Vice President for Academic Affairs Nena Perez have been raised and shouted by protesters, led by Aaron Fagyan, Randall Lumiwes, Cherry Mae Facullo, Roland Chacapna, Helmut Aguelba and other student leaders. And the protests continued in the days that followed.

To resolve the matter, students were advised to put their complaints into writing and request for a student forum with administration personnel. Students took the advise and requested for a forum with the condition that all unit heads, most especially the college president, will be present to answer the queries and hear the problems and issues raised. The forum was conducted last June 23 at the College Library. But the college president was not around and only came at around 2 p.m. that day to sit with the unit heads for the forum. The forum went on, and ended at around 5:30 p.m. When asked as to their assessment of the forum, the students claimed that they were not fully satisfied since again, commitments have been made as what was done during the previous forums, but without any assurance whether those commitments will be carried out.

Members of the faculty who were present during the forum also expressed their dismay, claiming that the administration is applying the same tactic over and over again during forums, which is to give explanation then give commitments that have no assurance of being carried out. They further claimed that since there are no written agreements made or overseers who can monitor whether the president will live up to her promises, students and faculty therefore are left with no other option but to hope. Faculty and staff also expressed their disappointment when the president rigorously defended her friend, Vice President Perez, despite the mounting number of complaints raised by faculty and staff of the college against her. This accordingly prompted the faculty to join the students in their protests, claiming that there is no hope that the president would change her mind.

In the week that followed, the college faculty, led by Business Administration faculty Mr. Dan Evert Sokoken, joined in the protest efforts by conducting a "sit down strike" commencing on June 28. They reported to duty but didn't attend their classes intentionally until proper action is taken on their demands. Students expressed support in

their efforts and were advised by faculty to self-study for the meantime in order not to sacrifice the quality of instruction. Despite orders from the unit heads to attend their classes, faculty members continued to express their dissatisfaction by doing the opposite. The “sit down strike” lasted for the entire week

Meanwhile, students continued their daily protests by conducting rallies in the morning, pickets in the afternoon, and vigils at night. They continued to bombard the administration with words of discontent and the continued call for the resignation of Dacyon and Perez. Local officials started taking notice of the persistent demands of the students. Former Governor Atty. Jaime Gomez talked with the students, and later on with the faculty to inquire about their concerns. He later called for president Dacyon to come over to Bontoc on July 1 so that they may talk about these concerns.

The morning of July 1 was greeted with a radio broadcast featuring the student leaders of MPSPC airing their various concerns and problems which led to the series of protests conducted. The broadcast ended with a call to the community for support. Hundreds of MPSPC students, faculty and staff all lined up in front of the administration building where Dacyon is reportedly housed, waiting for Atty. Gomez to arrive. At around 9:30 a.m., Gomez arrived and was immediately ushered by student leaders to the office of President Dacyon. A protest program was already in place that time. Students and faculty, who were later on joined by parents and community leaders, continued to shout out their concerns outside the administration building while Gomez and Dacyon chatted inside the latter’s office. Later, Gomez came out of the office and immediately called for faculty and student leaders to come have a dialogue with the president in hopes that the results of open negotiations between the two parties will end the series of protests. Meanwhile, community trustee Norberto Cue arrived at the office of the president. Student leaders and faculty later denied the request for a dialogue which prompted Gomez to leave the premises in disappointment.

Protesters continued to shout out to management. When noon was fast approaching, the heat of the sun seemingly fueled the rage of the protesters. They started getting more restless and soon enough, they charged towards the gates of the administration building, forcing it open. Students barged in and immediately proceeded to the office of the president and found it locked from the inside. Apparently, Dacyon, Cue, and others locked themselves in to protect themselves from the raging protesters. Students continued to shout out their demand for Dacyon’s resignation outside the doors of her office. The screams started getting louder and louder by the minute as angry protesters expressed their sentiments to the college.

Later on, college faculty suggested an idea to the president. They would draft the resignation letter and have it be signed by the president herself. Without any reply from the president, the faculty drafted the letter and later gave it to Genesis Kiaki, a student leader, for him to deliver to the president and have her sign it. But despite his persistent knocking and shouting, the doors of the office never opened prompting the students around to get more loud and restless. An hour passed without any positive response or any sign of her resignation. The heat and impatience, coupled by the fact that some of

them never ate their lunch, drove the student's violent tendencies. Using the heavy metal pot holder near the office, students rammed one of the wooden doors until it broke open. A huge hole, big enough to let a fully grown man enter, was immediately visible. And immediately, those inside requested for someone to talk to.

Sokoken immediately came to the scene and tried to pacify the restless students. He then turned to talk with the person on the other side of the door through the hole that was created. Sokoken insisted that there is no other recourse in this matter but for the president to step down. The person he talked to constantly lobbied for negotiations, more time to think, or a bargain as to when the president would resign. But Sokoken insisted that there is no other way than that which he presented.

The conversations went on and off. And the students around who are merely watching all of this go along, started getting tired of waiting for the president to sign her resignation. They continued to make as much noise as they can. Later, parents and community figures joined the students. At around 2:30 p.m., MPSPC Legal Officer Atty. Jose Co came with Sokoken. Co immediately proceeded to enter the president's office through the hole created on the door. Sokoken explained to the students around that Atty. Co was there to work out the resignation of the president. Several minutes passed without any positive results which again drove the students to shout louder.

At around 3 p.m., the students have had enough. Joined by parents, they once again tried to forcefully open the main door of the office. The students were so overwhelming that the surrounding security guards and army personnel could not contain them anymore.

At 3:20 p.m., the raging students were suddenly pacified when Kiaki held in his hand the signed resignation letter of president Dacyon. Cheers of joy echoed throughout the hallway, and immediately, Kiaki proceeded to show the signed document to faculty and students who were waiting outside the administration building. The announcement was immediately made that Dacyon signed her resignation.

Faculty members examined the document. And immediately, they noticed something wrong. They didn't believe the signature on the document to be the president's. In addition, only one copy was signed from the five that were given for her to sign. And lastly, the document was not notarized despite the fact that Atty. Co was there. Faculty and students immediately returned to the president's office to demand that these lapses be rectified. Atty. Co met with the students and faculty outside the office and explained that the document is legal and binding and that the signing was videotaped by Ferdie Castaneda, who was documenting the protest since morning.

The students however were not satisfied and demanded that more copies of the letter be signed and that all be notarized by him. Atty. Co gave in to their request. And at 3:26 p.m., the formal completed documents were shown to the faculty and students waiting outside. For the second time, the resignation of president Dacyon was announced

to the delight of the waiting crowd. Sokoken further announced that since Dacyon resigned, Perez will no longer be the vice president.

“We have proven that if we work together, we could achieve something,” shouted Sokoken. The students were then advised to now focus on their studies and were later informed that classes would resume next week. An impromptu party was then held outside the administration building participated upon by faculty, students, and community figures. (*Blaine Genner Bilalat*)