
Interview: Aquilino Pimentel

Defend Our Rights, Against Globalization

Opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, of the Philippines, was interviewed by Mike Billington on June 2, 2005, by telephone.

EIR: How was the reception to your speech calling for a New Bretton Woods monetary system?

Pimentel: The reception here is not that pronounced yet, because I just made the suggestion a couple of days ago, and there are so many things that occupy people's minds here. But I think I can sense that it must be getting into the minds of the progressive sector of this society. I was invited to join a forum, a television talk show on the issue, not only on my proposal that we cut the interest rates of the country, but I think that this will branch out into the matter of the Bretton Woods issue. . . .

EIR: You had mentioned earlier that you thought you might introduce this proposal into an international forum, perhaps the International Parliamentarians Union.

Pimentel: That's correct. That's still up in the air. If I can go to the Geneva convention, I will try to do so, but that is still not until sometime in October, so we are not pressed for that matter to act on now.

EIR: Let me ask you a couple of questions on international developments. I would like to know your response to the historic developments of the last week, both in Washington and in Europe. Mr. LaRouche has characterized the vote in the U.S. Senate against the effort by Bush and Cheney to do away with the filibuster in our Senate, as the defeat of an attempted coup, and many of the leading Democrats and some Republicans recognized that fact.

Pimentel: Well, on the matter of the right of filibusters, that is an important feature of a democratic government, where the rule of the majority must always be tempered by the right of the minority to speak out. If they were to do away with the rule of the filibuster, that would effectively muscle the right of the minority to really scrutinize, in the case of the U.S., really questionable appointments, especially to the judiciary, by the minority, by the Democrats, in the U.S. scenario. We are glad to see that the attempt to do away with the right to filibuster has been defeated, because we are also using that same tactic here to prevent the Admin-

istration from ramming through issues that they would otherwise be able to do without recognizing the right to filibuster. So in effect, we are happy with the development, that there was such a compromise arrived at by Republicans and Democrats on this issue.

EIR: I know there is an effort in the Philippines to change from the presidential system to the parliamentary system, and people who are promoting that say explicitly that their purpose is to do away with the kind of opposition that they run in to in the Congress now, by changing to a parliamentary system. Is that fight continuing there?

Pimentel: The move to amend the Constitution was articulated by the President just today, actually just a few hours ago. I am in favor of amending the Constitution, but primarily to adopt a federal system of government. Any attempt to change the *form* of government, from presidential to parliamentary, will have to undergo an intensive discussion to find out what is suitable to our own experience as a people. So that is the position, because this is the stand of my party since we founded PP Laban in 1982—shifting to a federal system of government, and the probability of instituting a parliamentary form of government, are parts of the platform that my party had advocated in 1982. My position now is, let's take a look at this issue, whether changing to the parliamentary form of government would be better in the light of our own experience as a people.

EIR: The danger LaRouche points to on this is that only the presidential system allows for the checks and balances that do not exist when you have a prime minister appointed by the majority, so that you always have a majority held by one party, while it also allows for the private banking system to have control over government, as opposed to the government having control over the banking system.

Pimentel: This is correct. This is why I mentioned to you that the parliamentary form of government, even in England today, is being criticized for the points that you have mentioned: that a party in control of Parliament would practically ram everything through without regards to any dissenting opinion. One of the things I don't like in a parliamentary form of government, if we followed the traditional way of drafting laws in parliament—what I don't like is that only members of the ruling party have the right to introduce bills. I object to that. I have been introducing bills left and right as a member of the opposition, and in some instances I've been quite successful in pushing those bills.

EIR: Let me ask also, then, what do you think about the French and the Dutch vote against the European Constitution, against globalization?

Pimentel: Well, that's a blow to all the aspirations of the European Union. I have mixed feelings about that, because I thought that the EU at least offers a counterbalance to the

predominance of the imperialistic features in the U.S., all over the world. If you look at the record, the EU stood against the justification put forward by the U.S. for the Iraq war. I thought that if the EU stood together to balance the unilateralism of the U.S., then there was hope for better treatment of the developing countries like us. So that's why I have mixed feelings on this development.

EIR: It is our view, and Mr. LaRouche has been very clear on this, that the attempt to impose the Constitution in Europe, even though it was presented as an effort to unite Europe as a counter to the United States, in fact was intended to undermine the sovereignty of the nations of Europe, and especially of France and Germany, by putting them under international banking controls. In other words, the international financial institutions that were running the proposed united Europe would have had dictatorial powers over the sovereign nations, and so, in fact, it was placing the European countries under an increased control of the Anglo-American financial institutions and "globalization," which is just the new name for imperialism. This is what the people of Europe recognized, because it was the financial policies of this Constitution, which were neo-liberal, globalization policies, which were rejected by the voters. So I think the attempt to describe this as a vote *against* the United States is wrong, and, especially, when you see that the French have now appointed Dominique de Villepin, who was the leading *opponent* of the U.S. on the Iraq war, who has now become their Prime Minister.

Pimentel: You know, Mike, I must tell you that about six years ago I expressed an opinion that the financial policies of my government, of our government, apparently are running riot over the lives of our people, because these are dictated beyond our borders, and without benefit of law. It's funny that you mention that now, because I was really thinking that business interests, I suppose on a global scale, try to overwhelm domestic interests—not only business, but all other policies of government, in the developing world. If that was the reason why the French and the Dutch have resoundingly voted against the Constitution of the EU, well, I am a little bit buoyed up by the thought that probably the other countries will begin to realize that developing countries like us in Asia have rights, inalienable rights, to defend the lives of our people against the onslaught of globalization.

EIR: Yes, I agree. I think that there is a wave of opposition spreading out from Washington through Europe, which has the potential of moving into Asia, in opposition to globalization, and I think, in fact, that your resolute call for a New Bretton Woods represents precisely that intent and that growing ferment.

Pimentel: Yes, and I'm going to follow that through by filing a formal resolution, perhaps when Congress resumes its ses-

sion in July. In the meantime, I have some elbow room to prepare that resolution well.

EIR: I hope so, because we're going to try very hard to get some of the other nations on board, not only Asian, but around the world. The Latin American nations are reading your speech very closely. As you know, they are faced with a similar policy of the destruction of their national economies by the international financial institutions, and we are trying to organize them to take the same kind of global view, that the Italians have, and that you have in this call.

Pimentel: Yes, I am so happy and grateful that you are taking the trouble of disseminating that information from a non-entity like me! I think it is good for people who are similarly minded—we in Asia are very much concerned and alarmed at the rate our economies are being raped and devastated by the policies of globalization, but don't seem to care about the welfare of the teeming masses of the peoples of Asia.

EIR: In your speech, you were speaking to a building association, and you concluded with a call for a national home-building program, which you strongly indicated would depend upon a functioning world monetary system. Could you comment on this plan? Because I know when I visit the Philippines, it is always striking to see how many squatters, how many homeless people there are in the country.

Pimentel: Mike, I think you must have noticed in my speech that I cited the statistics of roughly 500,000 housing units needed every year. Considering the magnitude of that problem, I know that we cannot rely only on our domestic resources. That is why, even if I was not able to develop that thought more clearly in my speech, I was insinuating that it is all right if we borrow money from financial institutions, provided that we have a cap to interest rates that are being imposed upon us, and we should never be left dependent on the whims of our international creditors to raise the interest rates whenever the exchange rate between the dollar and the peso changes. I certainly believe that if we can get to that point, where an international monetary order of some sort, a New Bretton Woods agreement with fixed rates that could facilitate the development the world, and not only the developed world but also the developing world—because I understand that, I think, about two-thirds of the [consumption of the] consuming world is based in the developing world.

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