

RECORD OF THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2003

ROLLCALL

OPENING OF THE SESSION

At 4:20 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Franklin M. Drilon, called the session to order.

The President. The 12th session of the Third Regular Session of the Twelfth Congress is hereby called to order. Let us all stand for the opening prayer to be led by Sen. Loren B. Legarda.

Everybody rose for the prayer.

PRAYER

Senator Legarda.

Almighty God,

We glorify and magnify Your Name as we gather here today.

We bow our heads in fervent prayer to ask for Your guidance and blessings to be upon our nation and our people. May Your presence be with us as we face the challenges that continuously test our resolve to be Your instruments of peace and love. Grant us, O Lord, the wisdom to do great things and the capacity to surpass our problems.

As Your servants, we ask You, Lord, to bless every work of our hands, every word of our mouth, every feeling that we harbor, and every life that we touch.

Allow us to imbibe in our daily lives the teaching of Master Cheng Yen that, in all humility, we acknowledge that, "There is no one that we cannot love; there is no one that we cannot trust; and there is no one that we cannot forgive."

In these difficult times, give us the compassion to continue serving our people and country and the inner strength to uphold the value of sacrifice and love for others in our daily lives.

Let peace reign among us and hatred be extinguished from our hearts.

This we ask in Your Name.

Amen.

The President. The Secretary will please call the roll.

The Secretary, reading:

- Senator Edgardo J. Angara Present
- Senator Teresa Aquino-Oreta Present
- Senator Joker P. Arroyo Present
- Senator Robert Z. Barbers Present
- Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon Present
- Senator Noli "Kabayan" De Castro Present
- Senator Luisa "Loi" P. Ejercito Estrada Present
- Senator Juan M. Flavier Present
- Senator Gregorio B. Honasan Absent
- Senator Robert S. "JAWO" Jaworski Present
- Senator Panfilo M. Lacson Present
- Senator Loren B. Legarda Present
- Senator Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr. Present
- Senator John Henry R. Osmeña Present*
- Senator Sergio R. Osmeña III Absent
- Senator Francis N. Pangilinan Present
- Senator Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. Present
- Senator Ralph G. Recto Present
- Senator Ramon B. Revilla Absent
- Senator Vicente C. Sotto III Present
- Senator Manuel B. Villar Jr. Present
- The President Present

The President. With 18 senators present, there is a quorum. The Majority Leader is recognized.

THE JOURNAL
(Consideration Deferred)

Senator Legarda. Mr. President, I move that we defer the consideration and approval of the *Journal* of the 11th session at a later hour because it is still being finalized.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, consideration and approval of the *Journal* of the previous session is deferred to a later hour.

Senator Legarda. Mr. President, I ask that we recognize Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta on a point of personal and collective privilege.

The President. Can the *Record* reflect the matter of personal privilege which the senator wishes to be recognized?

* Arrived after the roll call

Reorganization, on Senate Bill No. 2637, with Senators Loren Legarda, Angara and Pimentel Jr. as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT PRESCRIBING THE USE OF PHILIPPINE TROPICAL FABRIC AND DYES FOR OFFICIAL UNIFORMS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 663 and 2249, taking into consideration House Bill No. 5977.

Sponsors: Senators Legarda, Angara and Pimentel Jr.

The President. To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

The Secretary. Committee Report No. 264, prepared and submitted by the Committee on Foreign Relations, on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 663, entitled

RESOLUTION CONCURRING IN THE RATIFICATION OF THE REGIONAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF STUDIES, DIPLOMAS AND DEGREES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC,

recommending its approval without amendments.

Sponsor: Senator Villar Jr.

The President. To the Calendar for Ordinary Business. The Majority Leader is recognized.

BILL ON SECOND READING
S. No. 2155—Magna Carta for the Working Child
(Continuation)

Senator Legarda. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 2155 as reported out under Committee Report No. 52.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 2155 is now in order.

Senator Legarda. We are in the period of individual amendments. I ask that the sponsor, Sen. Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr., be recognized.

The President. Sen. Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr. is recognized.

Senator Legarda. To introduce her individual amendments, I ask that Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta be recognized.

The President. Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta is recognized for the period of individual amendments.

Senator Magsaysay. We are ready, Mr. President.

AQUINO-ORETA AMENDMENTS

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Mr. President, on page 2, line 6...

The President. For the record, are we looking at the amended copy as of August 19, 2003?

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Yes, Mr. President, the amended copy as of August 19, 2003.

The President. Please proceed.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On page 2, line 6, letter (a), change "Child labor" to Child WORK.

Senator Magsaysay. Is it on page 2?

The President. On page 2, line 6, the proposed amendment is to change "labor" to WORK.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. No, the definition, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, that is right, the definition.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. "Child labor refers to any work", et cetera.

The President. The proposal is to change "Child labor" to Child WORK.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. No, define "Child labor".

Senator Magsaysay. I move that we suspend the session for one minute because my version here has not been updated to August 19. We are now getting the amended copy as of August 19.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. All right.

Senator Magsaysay. We are now ready, Mr. President.

The President. Maybe Senator Aquino-Oreta can reiterate her proposed amendment.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Mr. President, on page 2, Section 3, "Definition of Terms", letter (a). We are proposing the following: Child WORK refers to any ECONOMIC activity DONE by a child BELOW EIGHTEEN (18) YEARS OLD.

Senator Magsaysay. The chair regrets not to accept this on the basis that the ILO has the same standard definition using the term "Child labor", Mr. President.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Do we have to follow that, Mr. President? We are making our own law.

Senator Magsaysay. But this is a measure that is international in scope and we would like to harmonize with the accepted standard definition and term of the International Labor Organization, Mr. President.

The President. The Chair also notes that on line 8, "Child" is a person below 18 years of age. So does it not capture also the amendment proposed by Senator Aquino-Oreta?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

The session is suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. *[There was none.]*

It was 4:58 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:59 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed. Senator Aquino-Oreta is recognized.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Mr. President, we will accept "Child labor".

Senator Magsaysay. May I also welcome the withdrawal of that amendment, Mr. President, because we are not against child work; we are against child labor because child work is light work. Children learn to take responsibility. They respect rights to health and education—occasional, light and legal. While child labor is hazardous work so it exploits him. There is a deprivation of rights to health and education because of long hours of work which is illegal. So, there is that definition.

Thank you, Mr. President. We will stick to the international standard or norm.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On page 5, Mr. President, it reads: "SEC. 4. *Rights of the Working Child.* (a) To be provided a standard of living that would support his/her..." et cetera, up to "social development". May we add a new provision which reads: (B) TO REST AND LEISURE, TO ENGAGE IN PLAY AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES APPROPRIATE TO THE AGE OF THE CHILD.

Senator Magsaysay. So, the lady senator wants a new subsection (B), Mr. President?

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Yes. After letter (a), we add this instead of the letter (b) here which reads: "To protection against all forms of exploitation".

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is it a new subsection (B) or to be added to the existing subsection (b)?

Senator Aquino-Oreta. No, a new subsection (B) and then the (b) there becomes (c). Then reletter the subsequent subsections.

The President. All right. Is there any objection? *[Silence]* There being none, the amendment is approved. The Secretary is directed to reletter the subsequent subsections (b), (c), et cetera.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On page 7, Section 8, line 11.

Senator Magsaysay. Again, Mr. President.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On page 7, Section 8, line 14. Sorry.

The President. Please proceed.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On line 14, after the words "minimum wage", insert the phrase PREVAILING IN THE REGION. So, it now reads: "The working child shall be entitled to at least the prescribed minimum wage PREVAILING IN THE REGION and to personally receive his/her wage."

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? *[Silence]* There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. On page 9, the word "hazardous" is enough. It reads: "hazardous or is harmful to the child's health..."

The President. What line, Senator Aquino-Oreta?

Senator Aquino-Oreta. This is line 16.

The President. Please proceed.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Can we replace the word "harmful" with DETRIMENTAL?—"hazardous or is DETRIMENTAL to the child's health..."

Senator Magsaysay. We have no objection, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? *[Silence]* There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. Mr. President, may we go now to the short title?

The President. There might be other amendments yet. So, may we please defer the same.

Senator Aquino-Oreta. I have no more amendments, Mr. President.

The President. Are there other amendments, Madam Majority Leader?

Senator Legarda. I ask that Sen. Noli de Castro be recognized first; then Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr., Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III and this representation, in that order for the amendments.

The President. All right. And then Senator Aquino-Oreta for the title of the measure.

Senator De Castro may proceed.

DE CASTRO AMENDMENTS

Senator De Castro. Thank you, Mr. President. On page 8, Section 14, line 19, add a new sentence to read as follows: PROVIDED THAT NOT MORE THAN TWENTY PERCENT (20%) OF THE CHILD'S INCOME MAY BE USED FOR THE COLLECTIVE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY.

So, Mr. President, Section 14 would read: "SEC. 14. *Ownership and Usage of the Working Child's Income.* - The wages, salaries, earning and other income of the working child shall belong to him/her in ownership and shall be set aside primarily for the child's support, education or skills acquisition and secondarily to the collective needs of the family, PROVIDED THAT NOT MORE THAN TWENTY PERCENT (20%) OF THE CHILD'S INCOME MAY BE USED FOR THE COLLECTIVE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY."

The President. What does the sponsor say?

Senator Magsaysay. We have no objection. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? *[Silence]* There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. On the same page, Section 16, line 25, we would like to propose an amendment to the amendment. I propose to further reduce the amount stated therein from "TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PESOS (P200,000)" to FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS (P50,000).

Just to be consistent with Article No. 225 of the Family Code which states in part: "Where the market value of the property or the annual income of the child exceeds P50,000, the parent concerned shall be required to furnish a bond in such amount as the court may determine, but not less than ten percent (10%) of the value of the property or annual income to guarantee the performance of the obligations prescribed for general guardians."

By lowering the amount, Mr. President, the interest of the child would be better protected. And this would further give substance to the declared policy under Section 2 of this bill.

Senator Magsaysay. The Minority Leader amended the amount from the original P500,000 to P200,000 which the chair accepted yesterday.

So, I would like to ask the senator from Cebu and Quezon City...

The President. Before that, the Chair would like to remind our colleagues that this requires going to court. The lower the amount to impose, the more instances the parents would be required to go to court. The more instances would they need to hire a lawyer to file a petition in court.

So the Chair does not know whether we would want a situation that every time there is income, one would go to the Regional Trial Court to file a petition. In the first place, P50,000 is not within the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court in case of money claims. It is much higher than that. So the Chair is just pointing that out to our good colleagues.

Senator Sotto. Mr. President.

The President. Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III is recognized.

Senator Sotto. I am glad that the Chair pointed that out. I am actually in a quandary with this proposal because, precisely, the other day, when we proposed this, we know that P500,000 is a bit too high. But we thought that a P200,000 compromise would be better. But at P50,000, to be consistent with the Family Code, I really would like to submit to the Body instead because it exists as far as the Family Code is concerned. So why do we need it here? I mean, I do not know. Probably I would leave it to the committee chair, Mr. President. I have already espoused my proposal then and why. So I will leave it to the chair at this point.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President.

The President. Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. is recognized.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President, in our discussion on this issue sometime ago, I have always maintained that the relationship between parent and child should not be dictated by legal provisions other than those that are already found in the Civil Code.

In other words, generally speaking, it looks very materialistic, to say the least, for the law that we are crafting to require parents to post a bond for the income of his child. To my mind, that smacks of distrust of parental responsibility over the child, Mr. President. That relationship should be governed by love, not by legal provisions. And if it is somehow transgressed by the parent, then there are remedies for that. The Civil Code already provides remedies when people abuse or misuse monies that do not belong to them. Moreover, I think that under the general principles in the Family Code where the DSWD is also authorized to look after the welfare of children, there might be no need anymore for this kind of a provision because, as the President also pointed out, this only makes life more difficult for the parents involved to have to ask the services of a lawyer for purposes of making them pay for a bond. This is really an imposition that, I think, has no place in a society like ours particularly because, as I said earlier, there are already laws that protect income of children from misuse by other people, including the parents. So, my proposal is to strike out the whole section.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Senator Magsaysay. May we ask for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mr. President.

The President. The session is suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. *[There was none.]*

It was 5:11 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:14 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed. Senator De Castro is recognized.

Senator De Castro. Mr. President, I withdraw my amendment on line 25, Section 16, of page 8.

The President. All right. The amendment is withdrawn.

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any other amendment from Senator De Castro?

Senator De Castro. Yes, Mr. President, after...

The President. Why do we not finish Senator De Castro's amendments first and then the Chair will recognize Senator Pimentel?

Senator De Castro. All right. Thank you, Mr. President. On the same page, line 5,...

The President. What page? Is it the same page? We are on page 8.

Senator De Castro. On page 16,—

The President. Page 16.

Senator De Castro. —line 10, Section 14.

The President. On line 10. All right.

Senator De Castro. On page 16, line 10, Section 14, as stated therein, should read as Section 13.

The President. The copy that we are using for purposes of the amendment is that of August 19, 2003. The Chair was wondering if Senator De Castro may have a different copy because page 16 pertains to different sections. What section is Senator De Castro...

Senator De Castro. Section 14, Mr. President.

The President. Section 14. So, it should be line 16 on page 8.

Senator De Castro. No. Page 16, line 10.

The President. Page 16. All right.

Senator De Castro. Line 10. Section 14 should read as SECTION 13, Mr. President.

The President. All right.

Senator Magsaysay. Regulating the hours of work refers to Section 13.

The President. All right.

Senator Magsaysay. Hours of work of the working child, Mr. President. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. On the same page, line 17, Section 23, as stated therein, should read as SECTION 25.

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. On the same page, line 20, Section 29, as stated therein, should read as SECTION 30.

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. On the same page also, line 23, Section 30, as stated therein, should read as SECTION 31.

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. And on page 17, line 1, Section 31, as stated therein, should read as SECTION 32.

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. On the same page, line 5, Section 36, insert the phrase IF ANY between the words "applicable" and "be". On the same page, section and line, delete the word "further".

So, Section 36 would read: "*Community Service for Parents Violating the Provisions of This Act.* - Any parent or guardian found guilty of violating the provisions of this Act shall, in addition to the prescribed penalties applicable, IF ANY, be required to render community service of one (1) month and one (1) day to one (1) year: *Provided,* That the maximum length of community service shall be imposed on parents or guardians who have repeatedly violated the provisions of this Act."

Senator Magsaysay. It is accepted.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the amendment is approved.

Senator De Castro. Thank you, Mr. President. That is all.

Senator Magsaysay. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. is now recognized.

Senator Pimentel. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Mr. President, on page 3, under letter (g)...

The President. On line 12?

Senator Pimentel. On lines 16 up to 20.

The President. All right.

Senator Pimentel. Will the sponsor kindly explain what is meant by "Charging a child... any amount or consideration greater than that specified in the schedule of allowable fees prescribed by the Secretary of Labor and Employment"?

The source of my confusion, Mr. President, is that, it appears that in this particular section that we are reading, the child is being made to pay something that is greater than the schedule of allowable fees. What fees are we talking about here? I think, since this particular bill would impose penal sanctions, it is important that we clarify things so that in the prosecution of violators, at least, they would know what they are being charged with.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Senator Magsaysay. May we have a minute suspension, Mr. President?

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the session is suspended for one minute.

It was 5:20 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:21 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed. Sen. Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr. is recognized.

Senator Magsaysay. The way we look at this, Mr. President, we are looking at a child being exploited by, let us say, an employment agency charging him or her an excess amount that goes beyond what the secretary of Labor and Employment has set as standards.

The President. If the Chair may help.

Senator Magsaysay. Yes, Mr. President.

The President. The gentleman from Cagayan de Oro will note that this falls under the caption "Unlawful Recruitment of Children."

Senator Pimentel. Yes, Mr. President.

The President. And line 16 would consider it as an unlawful recruitment if the agent would charge a child or receive from the child—presumably through a guardian—a fee higher than the schedule which the Department of Labor and Employment has set. The Chair assumes that there is a schedule in the Department of Labor and Employment for recruitment fees. And if the child, through the guardian, is charged a fee higher than the schedule prescribed, then that is considered as an unlawful recruitment of children. That is how the Chair understands this provision.

Senator Magsaysay. That is also in harmony with what we interpret it to be, because the Department of Labor and Employment is overseeing such activities on the working child.

The President. Yes.

Senator Pimentel. In effect, therefore, Mr. President, if that interpretation is correct, it has to do only with getting the child to work, let us say, through an employment agency that would demand payment from those who it would recommend for employment. Is that what the gentleman is saying here?

Senator Magsaysay. An agency or even his parents.

Senator Pimentel. Exactly, that is what I am trying to make clear in the record just who the parties are covered here because we have to specify who are we making liable under this provision.

Senator Magsaysay. For that matter, I believe that the child's parents, his or her guardian or guardians, and if there is a third party such as an agency is involved, any of these who are overseeing the child's service being provided, let us say, entertainment or music, are liable and committing an unlawful part of this provision, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. For the record, Mr. President, may we know from the sponsor where was this copied from? Is there any law elsewhere in the world where this was copied from? It is possible that this was just lifted from an existing piece of legislation and, without reference to the premises, this would tend to confuse people rather than clarify their rights and their obligations.

Senator Magsaysay. This is an input of the Department of Labor and Employment, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. In which case, Mr. President, probably, we have to recast the opening clause from letter (g) so that we refer to persons doing this particular act. In effect, we are penalizing an act without any reference to a person. I mean, we are talking here of a penal provision which demands clarity in terms of words and expressions so that we can properly implement the law. That is why I was asking. Maybe they copied this from some legislation. They might as well come clean and tell us where they copied it from so that we can...

Senator Magsaysay. We have no objection to the distinguished senator's proposal that we be more specific especially on the title. There are certain individuals' concern on this for an improved interpretation. We have no objection, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Senator Legarda. I move that we suspend the session for one minute, Mr. President.

The President. The session is suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:26 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:29 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

Senator Magsaysay. I will attempt to answer the question of the senator from Cagayan de Oro and Mindanao.

Mr. President, this particular provision, subparagraph (g), referring to Unlawful Recruitment of Children, is an input from the Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) and also from the Bureau of Women and Young Workers. This is one of the unlawful acts falling under the Unlawful Recruitment of Children, subparagraph (g).

There are instances, Mr. President, that when some recruitment agencies, not necessarily the parents or the lawful guardians, might be charging more than what has been approved by the BLE, the Bureau of Women and Children, Young Workers or the DOLE, that will need such a provision to fall back on in order to protect the working child.

The President. May I also invite the attention of the Chamber to the fact that under Section 19 of this measure, "Unlawful

Recruitment of Children," if it involves three or more children, it will be considered as economic sabotage committed in a large scale punishable by life imprisonment under Section 33.

Senator Pimentel. Yes, Mr. President. I am very sorry to say this, but this bill will never pass as a bill that penalizes people, I mean, should not be allowed to pass the way it is worded. I am very sorry to say this because I think there is a need to tighten up the wording of the bill in many instances. Obviously, this was done by nonlawyers probably. I do not know. I am sorry, but the sponsor has nothing to do with their work. I am just putting on record...

Senator Magsaysay. I understand, Mr. President. We might as well suspend on this basis so that the lawyers and those who are concerned can have another look at the issue.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF S. NO. 2155

So I move that we suspend consideration of the bill on individual amendments.

The President. All right. Upon motion of the sponsor, is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, consideration of the measure is suspended.

BILL ON SECOND READING
S. No. 2395 "Magna Carta for Senior Citizens"
(Continuation)

Senator Legarda. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 2395 as reported out under Committee Report No. 89.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 2395 is now in order.

Senator Legarda. We are in the period of interpellations. I ask that we recognize the sponsor, Sen. Noli "Kabayan" De Castro.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

The President. Before we recognize Sen. Noli "Kabayan" De Castro, the session is suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. [There was none.]

It was 5:32 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:33 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

Senator Legarda. Mr. President, I ask that we recognize Sen. Noli "Kabayan" De Castro. We are in the period of interpellations. To interpellate, I ask that we recognize the Minority Leader, Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III.

The President. The Minority Leader, Vicente C. Sotto III, is recognized.

Senator Sotto. Thank you, Mr. President. Will the distinguished gentleman, sponsor of the measure, Senate Bill No. 2395, under Committee Report No. 89, please favor us with a number of clarifications, Mr. President?

Senator De Castro. Willingly, Mr. President.

Senator Sotto. Mr. President, at the moment, there is already an existing law, Republic Act No. 7432, which grants benefits and special privileges to senior citizens. Republic Act No. 7432 was passed in April of 1992 under the able sponsorship of our distinguished colleague from Quezon, Sen. Edgardo J. Angara. I was privileged to be there in that Congress, the Ninth Congress, when we passed this.

May we ask the distinguished sponsor why we are amending the law? Is there something deficient in the existing law?

Senator De Castro. Mr. President, I agree with the good senator that RA No. 7432 has been very much, as a matter of fact, effective. *Dahil milyun-milyon nating kababayang* senior citizens are already enjoying the benefits and privileges under Republic Act No. 7432.

The committee, Mr. President, during the hearing, also considered the questions propounded by the good senator. The committee found out that RA No. 7432 has already evolved in a manner that the Philippines, by virtue of its membership in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific or ESCAP, is committed to implement the actions agreed upon in the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Aging for Asia and Pacific.

There was also a technical working group headed by the DSWD which formulated the 1999-2004 Philippine Action for Older Persons which contains the vision for the upliftment and development of older persons, which shall serve as the main instrument in implementing our international commitments. This plan addresses the eight areas of concern related to population aging in the Philippines. They are as follows:

1. Older persons and the family;
2. Special positions of older persons;