

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, Senator Estrada would like to register his vote.

Senator Estrada. Mr. President, I am voting yes for the resetting of the election for November.

The President. With 19 affirmative votes; no negative votes; no abstention, Senate Bill No. 292 is approved on Third Reading.

BILL ON SECOND READING
House Bill No. 2528 – Free Public Secondary Education

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we consider House Bill No. 2528 as reported out under Committee Report No. 99.

The President. Consideration of House Bill No. 2528 is now in order. With the permission of the Body, the Secretary will read only the title of the bill, without prejudice to inserting in the Record the whole text thereof.

The Secretary. House Bill No. 2528, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND PROVIDING FOR A FREE PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

The following is the whole text of the proposed House Bill No. 2528:

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AND PROVIDING FOR A FREE PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Title. – This Act shall be known as the “Free Public Secondary Education Act of 1987”.

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to provide for a free public secondary education to all qualified citizens and to promote quality education at all levels.

SEC. 3. Definitions. – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

a) Free Public Secondary Education. – Means that the students enrolled in secondary course offerings in national high schools, general comprehensive high schools, state colleges and universities, specialized schools, trade, technical, vocational, fishery and agricultural schools, and in schools established, administered, maintained and funded by local government units, including city, provincial, municipal and barangay high schools and those which may be established by law, shall be free from payment of tuition and other school fees;

b) Tuition Fee. – Refers to the fee representing direct costs of instruction, training and other related activities and for the students’ use of the instruction and training facilities;

c) Other School Fees. – Refer to those fees which cover the other necessary costs supportive of instruction, including but not limited to medical and dental, athletic, library, laboratory and Citizens Army Training (CAT) fees.

However, fees related to membership in the school community such as identification cards, student organizations and publications may be collected, provided that non-payment of these fees shall not in any case be a bar to the enrollment or graduation of any student.

SEC. 4. Implementation of Free Public Secondary Education. – The system of Free Public Secondary Education as provided in this Act shall commence in School Year 1988-1989, and that the students enrolled in secondary course offerings in national and general comprehensive high schools, state colleges and universities, specialized schools, trade, technical, vocational, fishery and agricultural schools, and in schools established, administered, maintained and funded by local government units, including city, provincial, municipal and barangay high schools and those which may be established by law, shall be free from payment of tuition and other school fees, except fees related to membership in the school community such as

identification cards, student organizations and publications which may be collected.

SEC 5. *Limitations.* — The right of any student to avail of free public school shall terminate if he fails for two (2) consecutive school years during the course of his study unless such failure is for cause or causes beyond his control.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — The Department of Education, Culture and Sports shall issue the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act.

SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws or parts thereof, inconsistent with any provision of this Act shall be deemed repealed or modified as the case may be.

SEC. 8. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we recognize its Sponsor, Senator Angara.

The President. Senator Angara is recognized.

SPONSORSHIP BY SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, distinguished Colleagues: A nation's wealth is traditionally measured in terms of its natural resources. We ask how much fertile land there is. We want to know if the country has abundant forests and mountains that may hide precious minerals or stones in its bowels. We ask if its rivers, lakes and seas are teeming with fish. Sometimes we also inquire if there are vast deposits of oil trapped under the ground.

The true wealth of a nation lies, however, not in this accidental bounties of nature but in its people. We are witness, Mr. President, to the phenomenal success of nations in our midst which have very little of this material resources. What they have are people who in adversity developed the human factor to a point where they

have turned a disadvantage into an asset and thereby spurred their country to greatness.

Today, I am privileged to sponsor in behalf of the Committee on Education the Senate version of House Bill No. 2528.

This bill is premised on the principle that the advancement of a nation ultimately depends on educated and productive citizenry.

House Bill No. 2528 passed unanimously by the House of Representatives last October aims to fully implement the constitutional mandate of free public secondary education. If the Senate deems it important to raise our country from the deplorable condition in which it finds itself today, it will pass this vital piece of legislation.

Mr. President, we often claim that our literacy rate is one of the highest in Asia. But this is not really an achievement we ought to be proud of. For what does such a rate mean when surveys equate it with the elementary ability of reading or writing a simple sentence. This kind of literacy even if widespread among our people is grossly inadequate. It is not the level of competence required by the nation to progress. Modernization demands much more.

We have now grown familiar with the statistics on educational dropouts. For every 100 pupils admitted in Grade I, only 65 finished Grade VI. Of this number, nine never attempt to enter high school. Of the 56 who enter high school, only about 42 finished that level, the other 13 dropping out of high school for various reasons. Of the 5375 private and public high schools in the Philippines, 3357 are public and 2213 are barangay schools whose academic quality is questioned even by our education officials. There are 610,298 students enrolled in barangay schools out of a total of 1,949,000 students in public high schools.

Mr. President, studies show that it takes at

least a second year high school education for a student to know how to study by himself. A student who goes only up to fourth grade of the elementary level has virtually no chance of retaining what he has learned, much less applying it for everyday use. It is expected that 555,625 pupils, about 28 percent of the 1,963,000 admitted into Grade I in 1985, will not be able to reach Grade V. The implication is rather disturbing, Mr. President. It means more than half a million of grade school pupils will not be able to retain and apply the skills of reading, writing and calculating in their lifetimes. This waste of necessary skills and impairment of future manpower is most appalling, especially at a time when we have to maximize every vital resource available.

Mr. President, we must never allow those basic skills already learned to be lost simply because hundreds of thousands of poor parents cannot afford to send their children to high school. We must help our present crop of youth now in grade school, and those who will come after, not only to acquire new skills but also, and perhaps more importantly, to learn how to apply them. The least the State can do in its mission to educate the individual Filipino is not only to transmit knowledge but to see to it that this knowledge is retained and put to good use. This, Mr. President, is the basic philosophy behind the free public secondary education program, not only to democratize access to our high school but also to build on the foundation acquired in grade school.

It is sheer waste of time, money and energy on the part of Government to send a child to grade school only to see basic learning dissipate because he can not go to high school.

The full implementation of free public secondary education will not be an instant solution to our myriad problems. Education, as we all know, is a slow process, but it is, in a real sense, the infrastructure of a society's

progress, social, economic and political. A nation of unlettered and backward people can never be progressive or free. It can not harness whatever natural resources it may possess for the improvement of the life of the masses.

Mr. President, this bill is a necessary first step to take in order to make secondary education a more potent tool to improve our human resources. Our social, economic and political problems will not be solved by giving free public secondary education, but this free high school education policy will create a people with more confidence in themselves and greater competence to deal with their needs, transforming our human resources from the burden and liability that they tend today to an asset for nation building.

What does the Senate version of House Bill No. 2528 seek to accomplish? First of all, Mr. President, the bill will fully implement the provisions of our 1987 Constitution which states, and I quote Section 2, paragraph (2) of Article XIV:

Establish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels. Without limiting the natural right of parents to rear their children, elementary education is compulsory for all children of school age.

And further, Section 20 of Article XVIII of the Transitory Provisions, which states:

The first Congress shall give priority to the determination of the period for the full implementation of free public secondary education.

The framers of our fundamental law, in extending free public education to our people from the elementary to the secondary school level, recognized an imperative need. They realized the value of universal education in the building of a democratic nation.

The bill is intended to enlarge the education base of our national development. From a nation

of six graders, ours will emerge, in due time, into a society where the majority of its citizens are at least high school graduates.

The implementation of the proposed legislation will match the experience of the most progressive countries today. It will enhance the opportunities of our youth for greater achievement in an increasingly competitive world.

Mr. President, the proposed bill also addresses directly the issue of equity. It is common knowledge, backed by statistical evidence, that poverty is chiefly responsible for the inability of many of our people to go beyond Grade VI. The disturbing survival rate of 65 percent in the sixth grade is directly related to the poverty of our masses. Similarly, the low survival rate of 42 percent among those who go on to high school is directly traceable to students' lack of material resources.

The issue can thus be raised: Should secondary education be made available only to those who can afford to pay for it? Or should a person's intellectual capacity be the basis for admission and retention?

The answer is clear, Mr. President. Social justice dictates that the poor should have as much as, if not, more opportunity as the rich to obtain high school education.

There are those who would say that prolonging the school years of a person does not automatically improve his education. True enough. Yet, quality in education is really a separate issue. We certainly are not claiming that a long schooling period is necessarily better than a short one. What we are saying is that this Administration has taken significant strides and, I think, will continue to do so towards the improvement of the salaries and qualifications of our teachers in an effort to upgrade the quality of education.

We are saying that other things being equal, an individual who has gone through high school

is better trained and better prepared than a primary or elementary school graduate; and therefore, has a greater potential as a nation builder. Let us, in other words, improve our schools in every level possible with available resources. But let us not deprive those who are intellectually qualified the benefit of a secondary education.

There is no doubt that the implementation of the free public secondary education plan will engender some problems. The question of funding is foremost among these. It is a legitimate concern. Likewise, the proposed implementation in the coming school year raises a bothersome point. Can we afford to open additional classes for a new crop of students, estimated by the Department of Education to be around 170,000 students? Do we have teachers to man the program?

To be candid about the matter, the funding problem is difficult but not unsolvable. The availability of teachers, on the other hand, presents no problem to all. We have enough qualified teachers.

On the issue of fundings, we have several options, Mr. President. One is a special appropriation by Congress to take care of the initial cost of the program. The other is the possibility of using a portion of the special education fund, which for fiscal year 1987 raised some ₱684 million according to the Department of Finance. This fund, incidentally, has prospect of generating a bigger revenue in succeeding years, because of the increased real estate tax assessment. A third option is the realignment of the current budget of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in such a manner as to finance the initial cost of the plan from savings. Other avenues are being explored to facilitate the implementation of the constitutional mandate, Mr. President. According to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports existing classrooms and other school facilities with some

repair and modification could be used for the additional classes. It is also possible to utilize present facilities for two or three sessions a day instead of one, in addition, through service contracting which has proved to be economical and viable. The excess enrollment in public schools could be diverted to private schools.

I wish to assure our Colleagues, Mr. President, that all of these problems have been diligently studied not only by the DECS and the Department of Budget; the DECS which highly recommends the passage of this bill, but also by the Committee.

Incidentally, Mr. President, present in this hall today is Undersecretary Tomas Santos of the DECS and Undersecretary Benjamin Diokno of the Department of Budget.

Indeed we have scrutinized the proposal with a critical and objective eye. At this point, we are strongly convinced that the cost of the program is a justifiable investment in the future of the Filipino youth.

Mr. President, distinguished Colleagues, I thank you for this privilege to speak on behalf of the plan for a free public secondary education. The next move is ours. The people await our judgment, let us not disappoint them.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Maceda. Mr. President.

The President. Senator Maceda is recognized.

Senator Maceda. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture. I would like to just ask him some questions to put this matter more clearly on the record. There have been, Mr. President, some comments published allegedly emanating from certain Members of the House of Representatives as early as our December recess that the Senate has been dragging its feet on this partic-

ular bill. Now, Mr. Chairman of the Education Committee, is it not a fact that the matter or the plan for free public secondary education is established and mandated by the Constitution?

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President, the plan is outlined by the Constitution but we need an enabling act to get the Department to implement it.

Senator Maceda. Yes. And, is it not a fact, Mr. President, that the big problem is not really the enabling act because I for one believes that from a technical standpoint, even without this enabling act, the free high school policy, even as a matter of Administrative policy by the Executive Department and the DECS can be adopted? The big problem is really in the matter of funding as already referred to in the Gentleman's speech. Has the Gentleman found out, Mr. President, why House Bill No. 2528 emanating as it does from the House, did not provide the estimated ₱700 million that the DECS claim they need to implement this program, in view of the fact that — if I remember in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture before the Gentleman's assumption, and as Chairman of the subcommittee of the Finance Committee hearing this — a substantial portion of the 1988-1989 budget of the DECS, if I am not mistaken, around ₱1.3 or ₱1.5 billion, is already earmarked or allocated for the implementation of the free high school program including the passage of Executive Order No. 189 which was the first step to implement this particular program.

Senator Angara. Yes. Like the distinguished Gentleman, Mr. President, I was also curious why the House Bill did not provide for an appropriation provision. I inquired from the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Representative Andaya, and his explanation is something like this: that in the 1988 Budget

there is already an appropriation of something like ₱360 million for the nationalization of high schools. Since the initial cost of the program is about ₱700 million for 1988 we need only one-half of the ₱700 million which is ₱350 million, and that is sufficiently provided for in the 1988 Budget. The balance of ₱350 million can be provided for under the 1989 Budget. That is the explanation given.

I checked this fact out with Undersecretary Santos and Undersecretary Diokno. They confirmed that sufficient money is available in the 1988 Budget just to start the initial cost of this program.

Senator Maceda. Mr. President, yes, but that is where the big debate is. Because, first of all, the initial cost of this program does not really take into consideration the lack of schoolrooms, to begin with, that would be necessary not only to accommodate the present enrolment but its expected increase in enrolment, as a result of which, I was wondering, although my views on this have not yet jelled, whether with the expectation if not the apprehension, that a substantial number of those who would otherwise be enrolled in private schools would now move over or enroll in the public schools. And the very clear situation where with the limited budget allocated which is, according to the Gentleman, ₱350 million or so — I thought it was even ₱1.3 billion; but that is probably the appropriation for the entire secondary education system — maybe it might be good to consider in the period of amendments a provision that at least for the school year 1988-89, priority — I am not saying exclusivity — priority should be given to graduates of public elementary schools.

Would the Gentleman consider that, Mr. President?

Senator Angara. Certainly, Mr. President, we are open to that suggestion. But just to remark on the Gentleman's earlier statement, there is

indeed lack of classrooms for the coming school year. What the DECS in their plans has provided for is either to use the so-called multiple shift session, which means more than two sessions during the day. That is one option. The other option is to contract out education to private schools, the so-called service contracting scheme. And for this scheme there is something like ₱28 million in the education budget to fund this option.

Senator Maceda. Unfortunately, Mr. President, while I do not disagree with that, I believe that during our hearings, both under my chairmanship and under the Gentleman's, it has been established very clearly that in a big area of the country, even if we wanted to subcontract, there are no private high schools that are existing in many far-flung municipalities, much less or much more barangays.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President, and we should not blink our eyes at that fact. That is why in the next years of implementation, I understand that the DECS would need at least ₱1.7 billion to accommodate both the teachers' pay, maintenance cost and construction of additional classrooms.

Senator Maceda. That is true, Mr. President. Is it not based on what was presented to me as a phase or a staggered five-year program? If I am not mistaken, a five-year program really envisions somewhere in the vicinity of ₱20 billion to fully implement it in five years.

Now, we did not hesitate to pass a budget of ₱2.6 billion for supplemental salaries of the soldiers, which we all agreed with. We passed a budget of ₱600 million additional for the police. And I am now in receipt again of a supplemental budget for 1988 for ₱2.1 billion for the military. I wonder whether the Gentleman agrees with this apparent policy of DECS and the Executive Department to accord a lower priority to what is obviously and intentionally the highest priority in the new Constitution.

considering that even in the Transitory Provisions, it has been mandated that the free high school education program should be immediately implemented. And so, by allocating only ₱300 million this year and even if we allocate the balance for next year, does not the Gentleman think that we should speed up this particular program and not go along with the apparent hesitation of the Executive Department in the implementation of this program?

Senator Angara. I certainly agree with the Gentleman, Mr. President, that as much as possible we should speed up the full implementation of this free high school. But I understand that the five-year plan is based on the careful study made by both DECS and the Budget Department. On an average cost of ₱1.7 million a year, the total cost of the whole program would be about ₱8.5 billion. We can check this figure with the Undersecretaries present now.

Now, I agree that if we have more resources, we ought to implement this as quickly as possible, Mr. President, rather than spread it out over five years. But I guess our wish is constrained by the fact that resources are so limited.

Senator Maceda. Yes. But if the Gentleman will take note, as I said, it seems that there are sufficient resources if they want so for other purposes. Even the ₱2 billion income of the PAGCOR, there is now a question as to where it is going. A substantial portion of it seems to be going to Presidential and Congressional special projects.

I call attention and I agree with the Gentleman's statistics that out of every 100 pupils admitted in Grade I, only 42 will finish high school or 58 will not finish high school. And to me, I am willing to bet that the big reason for this, while it is economic, is related actually to the distance or unavailability of high schools in the immediate vicinity, which makes it more

expensive for somebody, let us say, from a municipality outside Cagayan de Oro—I do not recall the name of that municipality right now—who still have to send their students to Cagayan de Oro City for high school, necessitating a tremendous amount expense for transportation, food, money and the like. So this statistics will never really improve until we see to it that there is a high school within cheap commuting distance or easy walking distance of every municipality and, eventually, we hope of every major barangay in the municipality. So does the Gentleman not think, I repeat, that the Executive Department is not giving enough priority to their problem in spite of protestations and lip service to the contrary?

Senator Angara. I will not go as far as that, Mr. President. I think the DECS and the Budget are trying their best to find the funds to finance our educational system, but there are just too many demands on our limited resources.

Talking about the casino earnings, Mr. President, I am glad the Gentleman mentioned that because I understand in many countries the earnings of lotteries and such are the principal sources of education and health. In fact, I know for a fact that in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Jockey Club supports the public education and the public hospitals in Hong Kong. That is the sole source of funding for their public education and the public hospital. I do not know whether some of our people may have some reservation on the use of gambling money to support education or health. But if we are going to have gambling, anyway, and lottery and such in this country, we might as well use the proceeds to good public purposes, like public education and public health.

Senator Maceda. I realize, Mr. President, that it may not be proper at this time to provide in this measure which the House could have provided probably because there was no certifica-

tion or because in their hurry to pass this bill so as to assume credit for establishing free high school education instead of admitting that it is the Constitution that actually established it and the Filipino people. Does the Gentleman not think it might be the appropriate time to consider making use of the third option, as the Gentleman had mentioned, to state in one of the last provisions, maybe, a new section that any lump sum appropriation, any special funds, like the NALGO funds, like the Barangay funds, like the adjustment and organizational funds, like the assistance to government corporations and others, that we authorize the Executive Department to realign any of these funds to be used in an amount not to exceed so much, let us say, ₱350 million if that is the balance of the ₱700 million that is needed for this purpose? Because I do not believe that this should be delayed any minute or any day longer and, certainly, the excuse or alibi again that DECS and the Budget will use will be lack of funds as they are already now using in advance. So would the Gentleman consider providing authority to the President to realign any lump sum appropriation in the Budget or any lump sum special fund appropriation for use in the implementation of the free high school program of the Government?

Senator Angara. We are happy to welcome that amendment, Mr. President.

Senator Maceda. Now, Mr. President, I just have one more: I was wondering whether there has been an in-depth study of Section 5 of the right of any student to avail himself of free high school education shall terminate if he fails for two consecutive school years during the course of his study unless such failure is for cause or causes beyond his control.

I understand the rationale for this, but somehow I have some reservations about it. Would the Gentleman care to explain whether this is the best provision that is possible under the cir-

cumstances or there is room for reconsideration and reevaluation of this provision?

Senator Angara. I think there is ample room for reconsideration of this provision. But let me just explain. As he said, Mr. President, the rationale is quite understandable that if a student repeatedly fails in his program, then he has no business continuing or to enroll since he is wasting, in effect, public funds.

On the other hand, we must confront the issue of whether high school education is a matter of right or privilege. If it is a matter of right then, perhaps, his right to continue despite two failures may continue to subsist and, therefore, there ought not be any limitation on his right to enroll. So we have to weigh the economic arguments versus the potential constitutional right to education of the student, Mr. President. But as I said, we shall welcome any perfecting amendment to this provision from the Gentleman.

Senator Maceda. Would the distinguished Gentleman give us an idea of what he considers "cause or causes beyond his control"?

Senator Angara. If he got sick, for instance, during a period of the schoolyear of such duration and seriousness that he has to quit or he has no choice but flunk the schoolyear, that is one, that is a cause beyond his control.

Senator Maceda. The other one is relocation of any sort whether voluntary or involuntary. As the distinguished Gentleman knows, in certain combat areas from Bicol to Cagayan Valley to Mindanao, a certain number of students, whether they are high school or elementary, have to stop schooling when their families are relocated either permanently or temporarily because of the insurgency problems in their vicinity.

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Maceda. How about the loss of

income or jobs by the parents which usually impacts on the ability of the student to go to school specially if he has to take public transportation to school and suddenly, his family is unable to do so and he fails because of economic reasons, as he said, and because of economic reasons, he is made to lose his free high school privilege. I think those are situations which are very common nowadays in this country.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President. Perhaps, what we can do is allow the DECS to issue the appropriate rules and regulations to provide for all these instances so that implementing rules ought to be promulgated by the DECS.

Senator Maceda. Well, maybe we can enumerate quite a few of them and allow the DECS to add whatever additional causes they may consider because sometimes we may have a DECS Secretary who comes from the urban areas and who does not realize the conditions of the other areas and would have a tendency to be very academic and is unable to understand the plight of the high school students in the non-urban areas. Would the distinguished Gentleman consider just making as much enumeration as we can and then leave to the DECS additional cause or causes beyond his control?

Senator Angara. Yes, certainly, we would welcome examples illustrative of this provision.

Senator Maceda. Yes, thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President.

The Speaker Pro Tempore. Senator Pimentel is recognized.

Senator Pimentel. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Will the Sponsor kindly yield to some questions?

Senator Angara. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. I would like to find out, Mr. President, what the Department of Education can do to accommodate the influx of high school students who are bound to crowd the public schools as a result of this program of free education. Already the resources of the public schools are teeming to bursting proportions even without this program. And so we can expect that if we are going to implement this program next month or next school year, we can more or less already predict that the public schools will be hard put to accommodating the number of students who will be flocking to the high schools.

Senator Angara. Mr. President, the Gentleman is quite right in raising that issue. In fact, the DECS anticipates that there will be an increase of 174,000 students, or about 12 per cent of the total secondary student population, when this is implemented in June. So, they have anticipated this increase, and what they have provided for in this contingency is what I stated: first, to perhaps adopt these multi-shift sessions — having sessions more than once everyday; second, is the school contracting scheme, to divert excess enrolment from public to private high schools. But, as pointed out by Senator Maceda, this is only true when there are private schools in the locality. So there will be problems, birth pangs, but I am convinced that the DECS has made sufficient preparation in anticipation of these problems.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President, the point that I am trying to emphasize is the fact that, with these anticipated difficulties, I think that we should provide the necessary support in terms of financing, which is actually the main problem here. And so, if the distinguished Gentleman says that we only have so much, so many millions to start this program, how do we expect to implement this on a nationwide level?

Senator Angara. According to the Budget

and the DECS, Mr. President, we need ₱700 million for a schoolyear funding initially. And since in 1988, there will only be half year, June to December, we would need only about ₱350 million. So we would need the balance of ₱350 million by calendar year 1989. That we can provide.

Senator Pimentel. The ₱350 million?

Senator Angara. Yes, because we already have the ₱350 million within the DECS budget right now.

Senator Pimentel. Now, in this consortium with the private schools relative to the admission of high school students, what kind of a setup do we envision? Are we going to pay the tuition fees demanded by the private high schools for those students who can no longer be accommodated in the public schools?

Senator Angara. Yes, that is the plan, Mr. President. The Government will pick up the tuition tab of students channeled to private schools.

Senator Pimentel. Equivalent to the charges set forth or required by the private schools?

Senator Angara. Kaya nga . . .

Senator Pimentel. May I point out, Mr. President, that in my city, for example, there is a city night high school. And the tuition there is only ₱4 a month, but if they go to the Ateneo, I think the tuition will be more than hundred pesos a month.

(At this juncture, Senator Angara transferred to another microphone.)

Senator Angara. I am sorry, I moved, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. It is all right. The Senator looks better there anyway.

Senator Angara. Thank you. I wanted to consult Undersecretary Santos.

Mr. President, we will pick up the tab up to ₱1,000.

Senator Pimentel. Up to ₱1,000 per student?

Senator Angara. Per student.

Senator Pimentel. Would we know how this figure was arrived at, Mr. President? Because if that is the case, I am tempted to establish a private school myself.

Senator Angara. I understand, Mr. President, that the tab up to ₱1,000 was based on a study conducted by the FAPE (Funds for Assistance to Private Education) and by the DECS jointly. And the formula is that, in a particular locality like Cagayan de Oro, whatever is charged by the public school per student will be the amount of subsidy that a student who goes to a private school will get from Government but not exceeding ₱1,000. So it is based on the going grade in the locality.

Senator Pimentel. Then we will also come up with the difficulty of determining which student should be allowed to go to the private schools where, generally speaking, the standards are higher in the provinces compared to the public schools there.

Senator Angara. Yes, I appreciate that, Mr. President, but they have test-piloted this scheme in several regions and they have found out that it works quite well despite these points of difficulties the Gentleman has pointed out. So the formula is workable and, in fact, it is working.

Senator Pimentel. There is no doubt that the formula is workable but the problem is in the choice or in the selection of which student who can no longer be accommodated in the public schools should be enrolled in the private schools for which the government will pay, as he said, ₱1,000 per student.

Senator Angara. Up to ₱1,000. I think the scheme allows the student his choice of schools,

provided the subsidy does not exceed one thousand.

So if in Cagayan de Oro, Xavier, the Gentleman's school is the best school in the locality, a student can go there and he will get subsidy.

Senator Pimentel. In reference to Xavier, Mr. President, there is no "if" about it. It is the best school in the area.

Senator Angara. It is accepted, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. At any rate, what I would really want to prepare the minds of our Senators for, Mr. President, is the fact that the process of selection of which student should go to which private school can really become a mess, unless there are adequate guidelines that perhaps Legislature should impose.

Senator Angara. I guess we have to leave that to administrative guidelines, Mr. President. I have been assured that there are such guidelines. I do not know them for a fact, but perhaps, tomorrow we can get the DECS to provide us the guidelines.

Senator Pimentel. The reason why I am stressing this, Mr. President, is that unless we have such guidelines, then favoritism can come in and can give rise to a lot of difficulties in the locality, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. We will have the guidelines for the record, tomorrow, Mr. President.

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

Senator Angara. Thank you.

Senator Enrile. Mr. President.

The President Pro Tempore. Senator Enrile is recognized.

Senator Enrile. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, Mr. President, I would like to state for the record that I believe in the noble purpose of

this measure because like the Gentleman, the Sponsor, I want our nation to be a nation of university graduates. Not just a nation of high school graduates. Although the distinguished Gentleman says that we are now a nation of only grade VI graduates. But, I am a little bit disturbed by the seeming fallacy of the presentation and the argument. Because, Mr. President, let us assume that the nation has only one hundred students entering grade I. Of these according to the Gentleman's statistics, 25 students will not reach grade VI. So, these people will not be the beneficiaries of a high school diploma. And yet, maybe, they did not reach grade VI because of poverty. And of the 65 who reached grade VI and passed grade VI, only 42 will finish high school. Meaning, 23 of them will not finish high school for various reasons and we assume that it is because of poverty. So that if we add the 23 to the 35 we can readily see that out of a total of 100 Filipino students, 58 of them will never finish high school.

Therefore, the problem is not really the 42 people, because whether we have a free public secondary education or not they will finish high school nonetheless. The problem is with respect to the 58 students, 35 of whom will not pass grade VI; 23 passed grade VI but will not pass high school.

So, the question is, why do we have to deal with this problem now, rather than dealing with the problem of the 35 instead, the 35 plus the 23?

Senator Angara. I think there is no legislation in the world which can deal with dropouts because of poverty in the grades, Mr. President. What we are trying to salvage is that the 23 or the 35 who may want to go up to high school and 13 of them will drop out because of poverty. If we can save the 13 . . .

Senator Enrile. No, 14, Mr. President. I think the mathematics is not even accurate.

Senator Angara. Fifty-six will go on to high school, Mr. President, because nine. . .

Senator Enrile. Fifty-six minus 42 is 14.

Senator Angara. Sixty-five will finish grade VI, Mr. President, but nine out of the 65 will not continue on to high school.

Senator Enrile. That is correct, but . . .

Senator Angara. And out of the 56, 42 will graduate. That means 13 will . . .

Senator Enrile. Fourteen, Mr. President. Fifty-six minus 42 is 14.

Senator Angara. Fourteen will pull out. So if we can only save that 14 and our guess is that they can not continue on to high school and complete high school because of poverty, I think that is already a marked improvement over the present situation.

Senator Enrile. So that the thrust of this bill is merely to deal with the 14 . . .

Senator Angara. No.

Senator Enrile. . . . who can not finish high school because may be on the assumption that they look the economic wherewithals to finish high school. But instead, what I am suggesting is that we should not only deal with his narrow number, but that we should deal with the 35 who can not finish grade VI plus the nine who can not even get into high school maybe because of poverty?

Senator Angara. Yes, I agree with the Gentleman, but the plight of the 35 who will go on or who will not finish grade VI is a function of the economy. And as long as we do not improve the economy, I do not think we can do anything by way of legislation in keeping them in the grades.

Senator Enrile. Does not the Gentleman think that there is a much deeper problem in our educational system than just the question of pesos and centavos; that really the system

is to be reviewed and overhauled? Because of the fact that in the citation of the Gentleman of countries that have developed economically, he never will see a country of the character of the Philippines which has its own indigenous dialects and national tongue, yet it uses foreign tongue to start the educational process of its people from grade school. In the case of Taiwan, they use Chinese for their own educational system from the very beginning; it is a tongue in the home of every Chinese family; in Korea, the same thing; in Japan, the same thing; in Spain, the same thing.

Senator Angara. I agree with the Gentleman.

Senator Enrile. And all of these countries have progressed, including Singapore. And in Indonesia they use Bahasa Malaysia, and yet in the Philippines, we use English to start our grade schools, although the Filipino child starts learning in his own family, in his home. Does not the Gentleman think that there is a much different system in the inutility of our educational system, Mr. President?

Senator Angara. I agree with the Gentleman, Mr. President, that there is a need and the time is now to have the educational system revamped and reviewed. That is the reason why we filed a companion bill which would create a congressional commission to review the educational system of the country. And the problem is not just exclusively language, Mr. President. There is a problem of teacher training; there is a problem of curriculum; and there is a problem of infrastructure. So, I think we ought to review, as he suggested, the whole educational system. In the meantime, I think we owe it to our people to implement the constitutional mandate of free high school.

Senator Enrile. But in the Transitory Provisions of the Constitution, it simply says that "The first Congress shall give priority to the

determination of the period. It did not say that we have to implement immediately. We merely determine the period for the full implementation of free public secondary education. And I agree with his statement, on page 6 of his speech, that social justice dictates that the poor should have as much opportunity as the rich to obtain high school education. But if 35 people of the 100 Filipinos in my fictionalized presentation cannot even finish grade VI, where is the social justice for these 35 Filipinos although he is extending social justice to 14 Filipinos, which is actually the coverage of his proposal?

Senator Angara. The social justice there, Mr. President, is that there will be an opportunity — I am not saying that these 35 will finish the grade school and go on to high school — but I am saying that we are offering an opportunity even to these 35 who have not finished to go to high school. . .

Senator Enrile. Precisely, Mr. President, my proposal. . .

Senator Angara. Excuse me, Mr. President. Because from now on, high school will be free for them.

Senator Enrile. If they cannot even finish grade VI, Mr. President, how can they get to high school? Precisely, my proposal is: Instead of dealing with this problem first, we should deal with the problem of the 35 so that they will have an opportunity to go up, to finish grade VI, so that they will have an opportunity equally like the rest to enjoy the free secondary educational benefit. They cannot go to high school, under the present system, because they cannot even finish grade VI.

Senator Angara. I agree with him, Mr. President, but I am saying that we cannot legislate on them. I think the fact that 35 cannot graduate from the grade school is a function of the economy. And as long as the economy

is what it is, then, I think the retention rate in the grades will remain low as it is. But we foresee the day when the economy becomes vigorous and robust, and people now can afford to remain in school. And to provide for that eventuality, we are saying to those who will finish grade school that they can continue on to high school because it is also free.

Senator Enrile. So, therefore, it is admitted then that the thrust of this proposal is only with respect to the 14 out of 100 students entering grade I?

Senator Angara. No, Mr. President. That will help the 14 but we intend to help all who will finish the grades. Now, the statistics show that there are 35 dropouts out of a hundred. Who knows? By next year, perhaps, the dropout rate will be lower and progressively, it will get lower, until we reach the point like Korea or Taiwan or Japan where there is almost 96 per cent retention. So we are not foreclosing the bright future for these people.

Senator Enrile. I thought that that statistical presentation is the average over a period of time.

Senator Angara. As of 1985.

Senator Enrile. Yes. This is a national experience. This is a well-known statistical material in the educational field. That is why I said we are only benefitting 14 out of 100 because the 42 will finish high school anyway whether we give them free secondary education or not. In fact, with the Gentleman's proposal, he is burdening the Treasury because the 42 will now have a free educational benefit, just like the 14. Whereas, if we use this money to benefit the 35, we will upgrade the quality of the citizenship of this country, instead of just dealing with the problem of 14 Filipinos.

Senator Angara. Yes, it will benefit directly the 14 Filipinos. But, as I said, it will benefit all in the end. We are not saying that this present

dropout rate will remain constant; we are saying that as the economy prospers, the dropout rate will also go down. And, therefore, we are providing this opportunity to those incoming high school students.

Senator Enrile. But suppose the reverse were true, the economy will not improve, Mr. President, how can we benefit these people? That is the point that I am raising. Instead of using only this money to benefit these 14 people, for that is really the thrust of this bill, why do we not instead use this to improve the elementary education so that more people will graduate from elementary to be benefitted by this proposal before we implement it?

Senator Angara. Incidentally, Mr. President, there is already — if I understood right, it is already a completed process — an ongoing reform in the elementary education which is called the PRODED (Program on Development Education). This program really intends to make the grade school more relevant, I guess, and more attractive to the students so that the retention rate will be higher. So, what we are saying is that there is an attempt, there is effort exerted at increasing the quality at every level. This is an attempt at the secondary level to provide our students quality secondary education.

Senator Enrile. Mr. President, may I know whether the cost of this proposal is included in the gargantuan budget approved by this Congress for 1988?

Senator Angara. The cost of the program, Mr. President, for the first year which is school-year 1988-1989, is about ₱700 million; and half of that, ₱350 million, is already provided for in the DECS budget.

Senator Enrile. And this ₱350 million uncovered, will this be covered by a supplemental budget, Mr. President, so that the requirements of the Constitution will have to be observed?

Senator Angara. The balance of ₱350 million, Mr. President, will not be needed until calendar year 1989. So, it can very well be included in the 1989 budget.

Senator Enrile. So, for the current year, only ₱350 million will be needed?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Enrile. And this will cover tuition fees and other incidental expenses?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Enrile. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. Thank you.

Senator Rasul. Mr. President.

The President Pro Tempore. Senator Rasul is recognized.

Senator Rasul. Thank you, Mr. President. Will the distinguished Gentleman yield to a few questions?

Senator Angara. Gladly, to my Vice-Chairperson.

Senator Rasul. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to preface my question by stating here that I am all in favor of the grant of free secondary education. But, Mr. President, there is an apprehension among officials of the Department of Education and Culture that Congress may not be able to allocate the necessary funds in time for the school opening in June. And for this reason, it seems that the Department of Education has not formulated the implementing guidelines for this grant of free secondary education. Does the Gentleman think, Mr. President, considering the various demands on the meager resources that we have, we can still come up with the provision of enough funds considering that ₱350 million more is needed for the implementation of free secondary education?

Senator Angara. Yes, Mr. President. We have the firm assurance, both from the Department of the Budget and the Department of Education that the necessary funds is available for this year and will be made available for 1989.

Senator Rasul. Mr. President, considering that no less than the undersecretary of education is here, perhaps it will help if we can, right now, give the assurance that funds will really be available because on one occasion where we have no less than two undersecretaries of education, they expressly articulated this feeling, this fear that the reason they would not want to come out with any guidelines is because they would not want to fall flat on their faces in the sense that they will be telling everyone that there will be implementation of this program only to find out that the funds were not made available. Now, we do not have to go far, Mr. President, because there are existing programs which have been announced but later on we found out that the announcement was just an announcement and there was no implementation because the funds for that purpose were not provided.

Can we now assure the DECS officials who are present this afternoon that funds will really be made available so that by June 1988, the students who will go to high school will really be given this free secondary education?

Senator Angara. I have the permission of Undersecretary Santos and Undersecretary Diokno of the Budget that funds will in fact be provided.

Senator Rasul. Well, I am very happy to know that, Mr. President.

Now my next question is, if secondary education is really free, why does this bill not provide for the grant of free textbooks? Books are very vital tools for learning. We have provided here tuition and other related fees

and athletic, laboratory, library and citizens army training fees, but it does not mention textbooks.

Are we made to understand that textbooks really will be bought by the students or will have to be rented?

Senator Angara. This point was considered, Mr. President, during the hearing of this bill before a Committee. We asked why not free textbook and the answer is that instead of a free textbook program, there is a loan program that will require very minimal rent to acquire books. Now, why pay for rental books? In order to insure the continuity of the program because otherwise if we will just give it free it will cost the government another ₱100 million a year; whereas if you charge a nominal fee, then the fees collected can be used to augment the textbook fund of the department and thereby insure the continuity of the provision for textbooks and books.

Senator Rasul. Mr. President, we are presuming that we have enough funds. Suppose we do not have sufficient funds, can we go by a system of prioritizing like, for example, as pointed out by the Minority Floor Leader, there are students who can afford to go to high school. So whether there is a grant of free secondary education or not just the same they will be able to go to the secondary school.

Now, can we go by a system of prioritization in the sense that those who belong to the low-income bracket will be given the priority to go to the high school. That is in the event that we cannot provide for the necessary funds.

Senator Angara. I think that is a good point that the DECS' Secretary ought to consider when promulgating the implementing rules and regulations.

Senator Rasul. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

The President Pro Tempore. The Chair declares a brief recess.

It was 6:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 6:43 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President Pro Tempore. The session is resumed.

Senator Laurel is recognized.

Senator Laurel. Mr. President, I would like to ask my distinguished and esteemed Colleague just one question on a matter which I think is covered by the thrust of the bill that he is sponsoring.

Mr. President, I share the thrust, the feeling and position of the distinguished Senator that our objective and the objective of this bill is to make our country a nation not simply of primary education graduates but at least of high school graduates. It is not enough to learn how to read and write.

In the Constitution which has been cited by the distinguished Senator, there is a provision to the effect that primary schooling is compulsory. Primary schooling is a right under the Constitution. It is also a duty as far as the primary or elementary schooling is concerned. My question, Mr. President, is: Has the Committee headed by the distinguished Senator ever considered the idea of making free high school education compulsory?

Senator Angara. To be frank, Mr. President, we did not consider that point.

Senator Laurel. Does the Gentleman not think, Mr. President, that making high school education not only a right but also a duty would serve the principal thrust and purpose of the bill which is to make our nation more a nation of high school graduates rather than elementary school graduates.

Senator Angara. I, certainly, will agree with that principle, Mr. President. In fact, I think among our neighbors: Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, for instance, have nine years of compulsory schooling. And that probably, primarily explains the success of their country because they have a wide-base of educated populace.

Senator Laurel. In other words, Mr. President, the good Gentleman is in favor of an amendment when the time comes to that effect?

Senator Angara. Certainly, we will consider such an amendment.

Senator Laurel. Thank you very much.

The President Pro Tempore. Senator Mercado is recognized.

Senator Mercado. Would the kind Sponsor yield to a few questions, Mr. President?

Mr. President, I would like to express my support for this bill. I would like first to pursue Senator Maceda's line of questioning as regards Section 5, on subject of limitations. In this particular provision of the bill, the right of any student to avail himself of free public high school shall terminate if he fails his subjects for two consecutive years.

Would not two consecutive years be too long and too much leeway on the part of the student considering that he has to fail two years before his privilege to free public high school education is to be curtailed. There are so many students who are waiting to be given the opportunity to study, and each student who does not come up to the standard actually edges out another student who could be given the chance to avail himself of high school education. What is the justification, Mr. President, of having it set to two years?

Senator Angara. I, certainly, sympathize with the sentiment of the Gentleman, Mr. President, that two years perhaps may be too much.

That, as I understand it, is a part of the original House bill. The proponents in the House wanted to give a student a second chance to show his academic abilities. But failing that, then he has no more right after two years of failure to continue for a free high school.

Senator Mercado. A second chance would mean one more year? For example, if he failed this time, he is given one more year?

Senator Angara. Yes.

Senator Mercado. And then after that if he failed again, then he is not eligible anymore because if we are giving him two more years, two consecutive years, that would be too long and it will encourage truancy. He will also be blocking out some students who may have the intellectual capacity and dedication to pursue high school education. We are not encouraging academic excellence here with two consecutive years leeway. The Gentleman was the President of the University of the Philippines; we are proud that we, as much as possible, try to maintain a standard, that if one cannot make the grade, he will have to go because public funds are being used here. The Government is paying for the tuition of these students. In effect, these will be scholars of the Government.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President, and during the period of amendments, we would welcome any suitable amendment to this provision.

Senator Mercado. I do not know. I do not have any basis for my specific period but I think reducing it to one year would be more acceptable than making it two consecutive years. If he failed now, he is given one more chance, one more year, after that, it is no longer free, he can go to the private school. Would that be amenable?

Senator Angara. Yes, certainly, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado. On another section, Sec-

tion 6, I would like to be clarified with regard to the nationalization of secondary schools. I believe there are high schools now that are tuition-free because the specific city governments or municipal governments are able to provide them that particular privilege. How would this affect that particular program of city governments?

Senator Angara. Well, positively in the sense that the expense that used to be shouldered by the city would now be passed on to the national. So, in that sense, that releases so much city funds for other purposes.

Senator Mercado. Does this mean that the National Government will now pay for the high school education of students in, let us say, the City of Manila where we have free high school. Does this mean that the National Government will now subsidize the high school education of the high school students of Manila while in the past the City of Manila has been able to do.

Senator Angara. That is the import of this bill.

Senator Mercado. The City of Manila will no longer remit the amount to the National Government. It will only be the National Government that will pay for the high school education.

Senator Angara. That would be the effect.

Senator Mercado. If this is the effect, Mr. President, we will be in a situation wherein areas where there are already funds and a successful implementation of free high school will be altered and the burden shifted to the National Government. The same shall be responsible for the payment of salaries and the other benefits to the teachers while there are other areas wherein they would need more than just that support as far as high school is concerned. What I am trying to say is that could there not be a scheme that we can study wherein it will be on a needs basis. If there are municipalities that cannot afford to implement free high school, then let them do so. But in areas where free high school is being im-

plemented, why should we touch that and burden the National Government when the City Government can pay for it already from its own resources and from its own revenues?

Senator Angara. I appreciate that point, Mr. President, but the choice boils down to the National Government picking up the bill or leaving the support of these city or barrio schools to the city or to the barangay. And the choice has been taken that the National Government ought to pick up this bill for everybody.

Now, there are very few cities like the City of Manila who can foot the bill for free high school. The general rule is that many of local governments would not and cannot support free high school. That is why the choice or the decision has been taken that henceforth all secondary schools will be paid for and administered by the National Government through the DECS.

Senator Mercado. I have been listening to the interpellation; one of the issues raised by previous interpellator, Senator Maceda, was the fact that there are areas where there are no high schools. That even if we provide them with tuition-free high school education, they may not be able to avail of the same largely because of that fact that there is no high school building to go to, or if there are they are inaccessible.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President. That is why in Year II of the program, the Government must provide ₱1.7 billion to accommodate the construction of new high schools precisely in areas where there are none right now. So we cannot, of course, provide for it immediately during the first year of implementation. But we hope that at the end of the five year of the implementation, all these localities with no public high schools will be provided one.

Senator Mercado. I do not know if it is possible, and if so, under what arrangement — for us to just allow those cities and municipalities that

are providing free high school to continue doing so. And the funds that could be saved, be allocated to support other areas — that critically need government support. Manila, for example, has already a free public high school system. But there are areas, I am sure, in the provinces, in Bicol region, or in troubled areas where Government's presence is not felt. We could erect school buildings with the money saved from areas that already have a free high school program. Maybe it could be a better scheme. It is not clear to me yet, but what I am trying to say is that: Why not adopt a policy of: "to each according to his needs," [Laughter] Excuse the phraseology. I did not mean it to be an ideological statement. I am sure it could be phrased in a better way [Laughter]

Senator Angara. Yes, I appreciate his point in cases where the city or the town already provides for free education, why should the National Government move in when the savings they can make could very well be used in places where there are no high schools. But, unfortunately, the law has to be applied uniformly and there will be an advantage to a city like Manila or to a town like Makati, because then the money that they have been spending for free high school, they can now use for other social purposes, and still not impair the fact that there is free high school within the city or municipality.

Senator Mercado. Well, they will have more to use for other projects while there will still be an uneven development when we consider those areas that are neglected.

Senator Angara. That is true, but, we hope that at the end of the program period, which is five years, all these will even up, and even those places now that do not have high schools will ultimately have high schools.

Senator Mercado. Is it possible, Mr. President, to reverse the manner by which it is phased to provide high school education, first in areas

where government support is sorely needed. In other words, start from the far-flung areas in our implementation of this particular measure. And then, move to the developed areas later on. We should have a priority, and the priority would be the depressed rural areas.

Senator Angara. The idea is eminently sound, Mr. President, and during the period of amendments, if the distinguished Gentleman proposes that should be the sense of priority, then we can put that in the law so that the Secretary of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports will follow that kind of priority. I am sure the DECS will welcome that kind of priority.

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

Senator Angara. Thank you, Gentleman.

The President Pro Tempore. Are there any other interpellations? [*Silence*] If there is none, I would like to request Senator Laurel to please take over the Chair because we have some interpellations.

(At this juncture, the President Pro Tempore relinquished the Chair to Senator Laurel)

Senator Aquino. Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. Senator Aquino is recognized.

Senator Aquino. I have only one question, Mr. President.

May I know how the implementation of this is going to be envisioned? Is it going to be from first to fourth year immediately or are we going to implement only the first year high school for first year of operation and then on the second year, first and second year high school, the third year up to fourth year high school and so on?

Senator Angara. The implementation, Mr. President, is first year up to fourth year immediately.

Senator Aquino. But budget wise, Mr. Pres-

ident, maybe if we lack funds at the moment, maybe we can start with first year only. This is to accommodate the new grade school graduates, rather than those who are already in high school and are actually already spending.

Senator Angara. On the assumption that there are no sufficient funds, but as we kept repeatedly saying there are funds to support the full coverage from first year to fourth year.

Senator Aquino. One final comment, Mr. President, maybe for the cities that can afford to give free high school, we can inform them that there is going to be free high school eventually. Meaning to say, let us not give them free high school if they are already giving that, and apply the resources to the areas that do not even have high schools. After, say four years, we can phase in free high school for the cities that are now implementing free high school, like Manila and Makati where high school is free or almost free. Their resources for education can be channeled to college education. This is just a suggestion, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. That is a good suggestion, Mr. President. But as I said, we may have to apply the law uniformly and perhaps Makati or Manila may have reason to complain if the national government does not give them the subsidy for free high school.

Senator Aquino. If I may just clarify further, Mr. President, the amount of money that is utilized for free high school can be utilized for a free college education for deserving high school graduates in these cities that are already giving free high school, assuming we are bent on giving free high school to cities that are already providing this.

Senator Angara. I think the suggestion — that should be picked up by Mayor Mel Lopez and Mayor Binay.

Senator Aquino. Thank you, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. Senator Guingona is recognized.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, will the Sponsor yield to a few questions?

Senator Angara. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. I listened to the response of the distinguished Sponsor in response to the question of Senator Laurel, that the main objective of this bill is to increase the high school graduates, is that correct?

Senator Angara. Yes, Mr. President, that is one of the objectives. To encourage more of our youth to go through high school and complete high school, because we found out that with the kind of education we are giving we have to have at least second year high school to be able to make good use of our schooling.

Senator Guingona. And it is therefore quantity that is desired and not the quality of graduates?

Senator Angara. No, that does not necessarily follow, Mr. President. Of course, we could want to ensure quality education to as many Filipinos as possible.

Senator Guingona. Yes, may we know the steps that are to be taken to insure that there is this improvement in the quality of the new entrants into the high school?

Senator Angara. In the elementary grades, Mr. President, the DECS has just completed the so-called PRODED Program. This is a review of the elementary curriculum and the retraining of teachers, giving competence in our teachers in the elementary grades. So this one, concrete, tangible effort at reform is already accomplished by the Department of Education.

The second stage is to look at the secondary curriculum and school staff, and I understand this will be started in 1989. So, these are efforts of our education department at improving the

quality of teaching, as well as upgrading our curriculum.

Senator Guingona. May we know whether the bulk of our high school graduates graduated with skills?

Senator Angara. Well, probably not the bulk, Mr. President, because there is so much left to be desired in the quality of graduates that we have now.

Senator Guingona. When they graduate, they cannot type?

Senator Angara. Well, they are not supposed to know how to type, Mr. President, except when they are taking some vocational courses.

Senator Guingona. When they graduate, they do not know carpentry? As a rule.

Senator Angara. As a rule, yes.

Senator Guingona. When they graduate they do not know craftsmanship of any kind, as a rule.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. In other words, as a rule, our high school graduates at present are not qualified to engage in skilled occupancy of any sort?

Senator Angara. That is true in general, Mr. President. In fact, I think that is the chief complaint of employers in this country.

Senator Guingona. Would it not be better then, Mr. President, when we extend free public secondary education to our youth, that we increase not only the quantity but especially the quality of our graduates in an integrated manner and not to go ahead with this free high school without any real improvement in the quality?

Senator Angara. I agree with the Gentleman, Mr. President. But as I said some quality efforts or reforms are being undertaken by the DECS now and we hope that this reform will pay off in terms of better quality of education. But there is one thing, I think that we ought always to

remember. Quality education is an expensive proposition. If we demand quality education, then we must make the hard, political decision, that money must go to education in terms of upgrading the skills and salaries of our teachers, in terms of modern infrastructure classroom and laboratory, in terms of books and in terms of regular, periodic review of the curriculum. All these things require tremendous doses of money and therefore we must not simply say that we want quality education. We must accompany our wish with the political will to put money where our mouth is.

Senator Guingona. Yes, but certainly it would not entail much money in a grand scale if we, for example, initiate pilot projects of the Don Bosco type of education in certain areas so that we learn from the fruits and the mistakes of a Don Bosco type of education and possibly in the long run adopt this kind of curriculum because, I think the Gentleman will agree with me, that Don Bosco graduates are by far superior and are not unemployed. As a matter of fact, even before they graduate, they are already harnessed and applied for, so to speak, by many firms.

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President. I do not have the figure now but if one looks at the record of expenditure of Don Bosco per student, he will find that they spend much, much more than the average in private high school. It is because Don Bosco is technically oriented and the laboratory and equipment is very expensive. Secondly, teachers of technical and vocational schools are also highly paid. And because their demand in the market place is so high, we have got to pay them comparative wages to be able to teach in a good technical school like Don Bosco. What I am saying is: Don Bosco is an excellent school because it is willing and is able to spend more for that kind of schooling.

Senator Guingona. Yes. But this initial expense will pay off in the long run for the benefit of our economy.

Senator Angara. I agree, Mr. President. That is why I said let us have quality education and at the same time let us vote in this House for more money to education. Because quality education demands tremendous resources.

Senator Guingona. And, therefore, the Gentleman will agree to some sort of an amendment during the period of amendments so that we can have pilot projects to include this kind of quality education.

Senator Angara. Yes, certainly, Mr. President. But let me just add one general comment. I personally believe that the the first nine years — that means six years of elementary and three years of high school — ought to be devoted to general subjects, to the general curriculum, rather than technical or specific courses. Only the last year ought to go into specialization. Because I believe that giving a young person a well-rounded general education will prepare him better for life and work than making him carry on a technical or a specialist person.

Senator Guingona. Yes, Mr. President, but considering that the dropouts are more in the lower grades, I think we should gear our adjustments along that sector.

At any rate, may we go to a different topic? In answer to the question of Senator Pimentel, the distinguished Sponsor said that if there is an overflow of students, then, they will be absorbed by the private institutions up to the extent of ₱1,000. Is that correct?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. I understand that in some schools, that tuition fee in private institutions is more than ₱1,000 a year. How then would the difference be made up?

Senator Angara. It has to be made up by the student or his parents.

Senator Guingona. Would that not be unequal? Whereas the student who is not selected for private institution would be subsidized free totally, he who is made to go to a private institution is only financed up to ₱1,000?

Senator Angara. No, it is not an unequal treatment. In fact, the person who may be getting ₱1,000 subsidy could be better off financially than the one who went to public school because the public school tuition might be less than one thousand.

Senator Guingona. In other words, there is a criteria for choosing who will go to the private institution and who will continue with . . .

Senator Angara. I suppose the administrative guidelines will provide for that. And as promised, tomorrow, we will bring the guidelines.

Senator Guingona. May we know how many students go to public schools and how many to private institutions?

Senator Angara. Let me just consult my record. Mr. President, there are a total 3,269 million students in the secondary school both in government and private schools. In government schools, it is 1,900 million roughly and in private schools, 1.3 million, roughly.

Senator Guingona. The distinguished Sponsor will agree that before the Pacific war, before the grant of independence, the standard in the public schools was relatively high, higher than that in private schools. Is that correct?

Senator Angara. That is correct. In fact, Mr. President, immediately after the war in the 50's, I think the quality of public high schools is still high.

Senator Guingona. But the situation has reversed and deteriorated miserably through the years. So that now, it is the private institutions that are considered to have high standards and

the public schools to be very low standards. As a matter of fact, I think the distinguished Sponsor in his speech said: "whose quality is questioned even by our own education officials."

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President. May I advance one big reason for this drop in quality. In the 1985 or in 1986, the educational subsidy per pupil was 28 per cent lower than the educational subsidy of a pupil in 1965. That means our support for education has dropped by 28 per cent in 20 years. So we are putting less and less money today into education than what we were putting-in in the 60's. That is one good reason why quality is dropping in our schools.

Senator Guingona. But now that we give free education to public school high school students and the private schools, private institutions will exact tuitions, we will be creating two kinds of high school graduates, will we not? One, that is learned, relatively much more than the graduates in the public schools.

Senator Angara. Not necessarily. What we are trying to do is to improve the public school system so that it will catch up in quality with the private school.

Senator Guingona. May we be, therefore, favored by not only the criteria but also with the specific steps to improve the quality of education by the education officials, as well as the results of their programs to improve the quality by tomorrow?

Senator Angara. Yes, certainly, we will ask Undersecretary Santos to bring to the session hall tomorrow a statement on the reforms that the Education Department has taken to improve the quality of education.

Senator Guingona. Then, we will therefore make a reservation to continue tomorrow, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. Re-

ervation is made.

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF
HOUSE BILL NO. 2528**

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. The Majority Floor Leader.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we suspend consideration of House Bill No. 2528.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. Is there any objection? [*Silence*] There being none, the motion is approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE SESSION

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we adjourn the session until four o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Laurel]. The session is adjourned until four o'clock tomorrow afternoon, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 7:19 p.m.

