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SESSION NO. 142
Monday, May 2, 1953

CALL TO ORDER

At 10:10 a.m., the President Pro Tempore, Hon. Teofisto T. Guingona, Jr., called the session to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM AND PRAYER

The Body sang the National Anthem and "Bayan Ko" led by the Magnolia Choral.

Thereafter, the Body observed a minute of prayer led by Senator Laurel.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Chair, the Acting Secretary of the Senate called the Roll, to which the following Senators responded:

Angara, E. J.	Mercado, C. S.
Aquino, A. A.	Osmeña, J. H.
Enrile, J. P.	Paterno, V. T.
Gonzales, N. A.	Pimentel, Jr., A. Q.
Guingona, Jr., T. T.	Romulo, A. G.
Herrera, E. F.	Saguisag, R. A. V.
Laurel, S. H.	Shahani, L. R.
Lina, Jr., J. D.	Tamano, M. A. J.
Maceda, E. M.	Ziga, V. S.

With 18 Senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Alvarez, Estrada, Rasul and Tañada appeared after the Roll Call.

The Senate President was absent for a medical checkup.

In reply, Senator Mercado maintained that the Calendar for Bills Pending Third Reading is sufficient notice that they may be called for Third Reading any day. He also maintained that the Body is not required to vote on the measure exactly on the fourth day after distribution of printed copies as this would make difficult the scheduling of activities on the floor should more urgent matters intervene for action by the Body.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

At this juncture, the Chair suspended the session.

It was 10:53 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 11:01 a.m., the session was resumed.

REFERRAL TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Senator Seguisag stated that during the break certain complexities of the question were discussed which he would neither pursue nor question further but which he would move to be referred to the Committee on Rules for future guidance.

Thereupon, submitted to a vote and there being no objection, the referral was approved by the Body.

APPROVAL ON THIRD READING OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2528

Thereupon, Senator Mercado called for the previous question and, there being no objection, the Chair declared in order, voting on Third Reading, on House Bill No. 2528, entitled:

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

The Acting Secretary of the Senate called the Roll for nominal voting.

EXPLANATION OF VOTES

By Senator Aquino

Senator Aquino explained his affirmative vote stating that he is very much in favor of giving free high school education to all qualified Filipinos, being one of the basic necessities. He also expressed the hope that it will be implemented at the soonest time possible.

By Senator Enrile

Senator Enrile explained his affirmative vote by stating that although he has some misgivings on the implementability of the measure because 1) of the financial difficulties of the government; 2) the bill would not meet the problem of the educational system for which the remedy should be the overhauling of the whole system from the elementary level; and 3) the measure would benefit no more than 14% of the students entering the primary grade, he nonetheless believes that the bill is a good beginning.

By Senator Gonzales

Senator Gonzales registered an affirmative vote stating that 1) the bill is an implementation of a constitutional provision; 2) experience has shown that high school education is the minimum educational requirement for employment and, therefore, is a means of earning a livelihood; and 3) that education is essential to the making of man.

He stressed that whatever money is needed to finance the program is a burden for which Congress shall make provisions.

By Senator Lina

As Chairman of the Committee on Youth and Sports, Senator Lina stated that he fully supports and endorses the measure noting that it would affect the lives and future of the youth who represent 9.83% of the total population or an estimated 5.78 million of ages ranging from 12 to 16.

He pointed out that there are some 3.8 million youth in public and private secondary schools out of the 5.78 million, and with the approval of the measure, the difference of 1.9 million could proceed to the secondary level.

He stressed that the poor and the disadvantaged do not need only free education but more importantly, quality education, to make them sufficiently literate and vocationally functional to enable them to compete in the employment market or to be self-employed to support themselves and their families.

He expected, he said, that eventually, a companion legislation as well as executive policies and programs on the matter would follow to provide support services for the very needy yet deserving and talented youth who shall enroll in high school.

He informed that he filed Senate Bill No. 190 to complement all education measures including the bill on free secondary education, to establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies and other incentives to be made available to deserving underprivileged students in the public and private schools.

As a Third World and a developing country, Senator Lina stated that the hope in achieving a better quality of life for the people, particularly the young, is still in equitable access to quality education, upgraded science education at all levels, and maximized training opportunities which lead to livelihood regardless of socio-economic levels or geographic or ethnic origin..

Thus, in supporting the bill, he stated that he does so believing that the best education would be available to those who would avail of the free secondary education, otherwise, it would be the most expensive free program ever to be embarked on.

He stated that the validity of the NCEE as a measure to determine the qualification of high school graduates to enter college is already being questioned. He likewise questioned both the chances of those who had poor quality education of obtaining good results in the NCEE and of the effectivity of the NCEE itself as a measure of the students' capability for entering college.

Noting that the bill affords free high school education to those who otherwise could not afford it, he pointed out, however, that it does not answer the many other problems that beset the secondary school system such as the upgrading of the barangay high school and whether vocational high schools provide the level and quality of manpower resources appropriate for the labor market demands.

Senator Lina stressed that quality education means quality teachers who are reasonably paid; the availability of books and adequacy of facilities; and a curriculum which nurtures nationalism, value inculcation, skills training, and the ability to reason and think. He added that free education should also mean maximum access to education.

Finally, Senator Lina stated that he is voting Yes because the bill will democratize access to secondary education and stands to benefit 5.7 million students from 13-16 years of age.

By Senator Maceda

Senator Maceda stated that when the Constitution mandated the establishment of free public high school, the intention was that there should be free high school for everybody. However, he pointed out that there are only 4,000 high schools, 60% of which are private, to service the country's more than 43,000 barangays. He added that about 80 or 90% of these private high schools are clustered in cities, provincial capitals and a few big towns.

He recalled that when he was still Chairman of the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture, he pointed out the inadequacy of the service contracting scheme to solve the problem of lack of high schools because many municipalities have no high schools at all. He opined that in order to give substance to the constitutional mandate, more high schools within walking distance of barangays must be constructed yearly so that there will be at least one high school for every five barangays. He added that aside from building schools, the government should also construct the

necessary infrastructures like roads and bridges to connect the various barangays with the poblacion where most of the schools are located.

Finally, Senator Maceda urged Education Secretary Quisumbing and the Executive Department to now push and fight for higher priority in terms of allocation of funds in the budget in order to have full implementation of the bill.

Senator Maceda then registered an affirmative vote.

By Senator Mercado

Senator Mercado voted for the bill by recalling that when Senator Angara sponsored the bill, the latter cited statistics showing the high rate of students who dropped out from school before reaching college level for reasons of poverty.

He stressed that education is necessary to fortify the country's nascent democracy for as one British statesman once said, "education makes people easy to lead but difficult to drive, easy to govern but impossible to enslave". He added that the bill is a direction towards a more stable democracy in the country.

By Senator Osmeña

Senator Osmeña voted for the bill but expressed concern on the need for a relevant high school curricula that would train students to acquire appropriate vocational or agricultural skills that would better equip them to cope up with the needs of life after graduation.

By Senator Basul

Senator Basul acknowledged the presence of Secretary Quisumbing and Undersecretary Santos which, she said, highlights the importance and urgency of the measure.

Then voting in favor of the bill, she stated that it is a redemption of the election pledge to provide opportunities for the educational advancement of the Filipino youth.

However, she also expressed misgivings on the failure to include a provision on free textbooks, which are vital learning tools which the government should endeavor to provide for the masses who will need them most. She expressed hope that the non-inclusion of free textbooks is only temporary.

She voted Yes for the bill as a giant step in the right direction.

By Senator Romulo

Senator Romulo voted in favor of the bill stating that it implements Section 20, Article XVIII, of the Constitution which states:

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

Section 5(5), Article XIV, which provides:

The State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education, and ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment; and