



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES
SENATE

Record of the Senate

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

VOL. I

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

NO. 133

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 1988

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MOTION OF SENATOR MERCADO
(Senator Aquino's Membership in the
Committee on Labor, Employment
and Human Resources Development)

Senator Mercado. In view of the desire of Senator Aquino to be included as a Member of the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development, I move that Senator Aquino be included as a member of the said Committee.

The President Pro Tempore. Is there any objection? [*Silence*] The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

MOTION OF SENATOR MERCADO
(Creation of a Senate Committee on Style)

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, in connection with Senate Resolution No. 135, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING CHIEF
JUSTICE CLAUDIO TEEHANKEE ON
THE EVE OF HIS RETIREMENT FOR
THE SERVICE HE HAS RENDERED TO
THE COUNTRY THROUGH HIS EF-
FORTS OF PRESERVING THE IN-
DEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY
AND ITS PROTECTION OF INDIVI-
DUAL CIVIL LIBERTIES DURING
HIS TENURE IN THE JUDICIARY,

I move that a Senate Committee on Style be created, and I move that Senators Lina, Angara, and Saguisag be designated to compose the said Committee.

The President Pro Tempore. Is there any objection? [*Silence*] The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

BILL ON SECOND READING

**House Bill No. 2528 — Free Public Secondary
Education**
(Continuation)

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we consider Committee Report No. 99 on House Bill No. 2528.

We are still in the period of interpellations, I move that we recognize the Sponsor, Senator Angara.

The President Pro Tempore. Is there any objection? [*Silence*] The motion is approved.

Senator Angara is recognized.

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President. The parliamentary situation when we adjourned last night was that the President Pro Tempore was on the floor interpellating.

The President Pro Tempore. May we, therefore, request Senator Maceda to please take the Chair.

At this juncture, the President Pro Tempore relinquished the Chair to Senator Maceda.

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

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, last night we requested the distinguished Sponsor to furnish us, with the cooperation of the department officials, with supporting documents to show, first, that there are guidelines on the choice of affected high school students who cannot be accommodated in public schools to be supported instead in certain private schools to the extent of ₱1000 per annum, obviating subjective choices, so that there will be no disparity between those chosen and those who are not chosen.

Senator Angara. Mr. President, we are just distributing among the Members a copy of the educational service contracting selection guidelines and from this one can see the criteria, as well as the procedure for selecting the students who will go to private schools because there is no capacity in the public, and also the criteria for selecting the private schools in each locality.

For instance, in selecting a private school to which a student can be referred, there are four principal criteria being used. One is that the school is willing to accept a student; second,

that the school is geographically accessible to the student's home; third, that there is a track record of quality instruction in that school; fourth, that the school is willing to waive some of its rigid standards of admission in order to accept the transferring student.

In addition to that, Mr. President, there are two principal criteria also used in addition to the eligibility criteria. The first is the capacity. Has the school excess capacity to absorb the transferring student? And second, cost, per student cost is comparable to, or cheaper than the per capita cost of a neighboring public school. That is as far as selection of the participating private schools is concerned.

As far as selection of students is concerned, there are four criteria used. The first one is that the student has sought admission in public school; second, that the student is not enrolled or does not hold any reservation in any private school at the time of enlistment; third, that he should be a resident of the community where the service contracting is taking place; and fourth, his or her parents given consent to participate in the project.

Now, how are the students selected? This is by lottery, by random selection, Mr. President, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Senator Guingona. Just for clarification, Mr. President. If there is a random selection by lottery and the person so chosen does not have the capacity to pay for the difference in tuition, does this mean that there will be another lottery?

Senator Angara. Yes, there will be another lottery, Mr. President, because the choice is first of all given to the student whether to stay in the public school or whether he is willing to be transferred. If he will not transfer because of lack of means to shoulder the difference in cost, then he will be retained and there will be another lottery.

Senator Guingona. Who will do the actual choosing then, Mr. President?

Senator Angra. I think the scheme is being administered by the principal and the director of public school in the locality or in the region.

Senator Guingona. So that if there are students in, let us say, Buluan, who cannot be accommodated in public high school in Taga-loan, assuming that there are five students who cannot be accommodated, there will be lotteries for five students to be given the opportunity to enlist at the Ateneo de Cagayan. Is that correct, Mr. President?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. And if they do not meet these criteria, what will happen then?

Senator Angara. Can the Gentleman repeat that, Mr. President?

Senator Guingona. What will happen if the students so selected do not meet these criteria listed in the paper?

Senator Angara. Well, if the student cannot comply with the four criteria here, that means he will not join the lottery. That means he will be enrolled in the public school. Only those expressing willingness to be transferred will go into the lottery, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. Okay. May we now go to the second part of the question last night, which is: Does the Department of Education, Culture and Sports have a program to improve the quality of high school students? And, if it has, does it have any concrete showing of the success or the result of the implementation of such a program?

Senator Angara. My best information, Mr. President, is that the Department of Education, Culture and Sports is going to launch an upgrading of secondary education. That means it

has not been launched yet. It will be launched in 1989. This is the so called Secondary Education Development Program.

What does this program imply? It means that the curriculum, the teachers' qualifications, the infrastructure and facilities of the secondary high school will be reviewed thoroughly. If they will review the curriculum, they will introduce more teachers' training, they will look at the state of the infrastructure, at teaching materials, as well as classroom facilities and laboratories, the aim being twofold, both qualitative and quantitative, as the distinguished Gentleman stated yesterday. Qualitative in the sense that the upgrading of teachers' skills, as well as laboratory and classroom facilities, as well as teaching materials, would tend to raise the quality of teaching; quantitative in the sense that they want to study the participation rate in secondary schooling. As the Gentleman knows, the number of students belonging to high school age is quite large, but the people actually enrolled in high school is rather low. So they want to increase their participation rate by several means. We do not know what would be the result of that study, but that is one of the aims — to increase the participation rate. The second is also to increase the survival rate. As we have disclosed yesterday, Mr. President, the survival rate is only 42 percent. So one of the aims too of this Secondary Education Development Program is how to increase the survival rate in high school. So there is going to be a program to upgrade secondary education in this country. It will be launched in 1989, and I understand it will entail an expense of P4 billion over a five-year study period.

Senator Guingona. In other words, for the year 1988, there will be no improvement in the quality of high school students and the quality of education that we want to make free.

Senator Angara. I am not prepared to

say that there will be no improvement in 1988, because as I understand it, Mr. President, the efforts at improvement had been ongoing except that the Secondary Education Development Program would be really a massive review and overhaul of the secondary education. But the reform at increasing quality is ongoing, as I understand it. So we can say that every year the DECS tries to improve the quality of our education.

Senator Guingona. May we know the qualifications of teachers at present for high school?

Senator Angara. I am not quite certain of the specific qualification but. . . Can I have a one minute suspension, Mr. President?

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

It was 5:56 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:58 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer[Senator Maceda]. The session is resumed.

Senator Angara. Mr. President, in answer to the question of the Gentleman on the floor, the basic qualification required of a secondary education teacher is Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education or a Bachelor of Science in Education in general plus having passed the Philippine Board of Education for Teachers Examination.

Senator Guingona. And under the proposed program envisioned for implementation in 1989, what would be the qualifications of the teachers?

Senator Angara. It will basically remain the same, Mr. President, here I am guessing to be candid, except possibly that there will be more in-house training to be conducted for teachers.

But the basic qualifications, I suspect, will remain largely the same.

Senator Guingona. Concerning the infrastructure, the books, the teaching materials, is it true that the World Bank has lent the Philippine Government thru the DECS more than \$100 million for the purchase of certain books and materials, provided they conform to certain requirements imposed by the World Bank?

Senator Angara. I know, Mr. President, that the so-called PRODED program, the review of the elementary education, was funded by the World Bank to the extent of 100 million US dollars and \$50 million of that is for instructional materials. I cannot state categorically that the funding for instructional materials is subject to the condition that the Gentleman mentioned. We got to ask the Department of Education Culture and Sports.

Senator Guingona. We have here the representatives of the department. May we have the benefit of their answer?

Senator Angara. Unfortunately, Mr. President, Undersecretary Santos is not here.

Senator Guingona. When did this PRODED program start, Mr. President?

Senator Angara. I think that started five years back, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. And may we know the results of this PRODED program?

Senator Angara. It is being evaluated now and I understand there is no report yet or results of these evaluations. I could not state categorically what the outcome of this program is.

Senator Guingona. We certainly do not want to delay the proceedings, Mr. President, but since this is a vital aspect of the program and it is related to the distinguished Sponsor's bill, considering that our proposal is that if we

have to give free education which is very good, free high school, should we not give improvement to the curriculum, to the infrastructure, to the quality of teachers at the same time, and not wait for the cart to come after the horse?

Senator Angara. It is going to be almost simultaneous, Mr. President, because the initial implementation of the free high school program would be during the school year 1988-1989. And the study on the secondary educational program will commence in 1989. So it is almost concurrent.

Senator Guingona. Yes, but may we know what infrastructure, what basic materials, what textbooks are to be introduced in 1989 that would supposedly improve the quality of the high school students?

Senator Angara. Mr. President, the best way to get this information is to ask the Secretary of Education, perhaps during the meetings of the Education, Arts and Culture Committee, specifically, to describe to the Committee the extent and scope of this secondary education development program. But it will be almost impossible now on top of my head to describe what this is all about.

Senator Guingona. Yes, but does the distinguished Gentleman agree that since we are already tackling this vital measure that perhaps we should include consideration of that now?

Senator Angara. Yes, certainly. I think we ought to take that into account. But what I am suggesting, Mr. President, since that was the Gentleman's question originally, is that while we are going to pass a free high school bill to commence in June, the review of the curriculum and the other components of the secondary education will also commence almost simultaneously in 1989.

Senator Guingona. I have no quarrel with the distinguished Gentleman's thrust that he

hopes it will be simultaneous but we heard the distinguished Minority Floor Leader's comments when he says that he has reservations, that this will benefit only 14 of the 100 students who enter the educational mainstream. But if we have concrete improvement in the quality, it will benefit all the entrants.

Senator Angara. As I said, Mr. President, while we are already launching the free high school program, we would almost simultaneously launch the upgrading of the quality of secondary education. I have here in abstract of the review that the department will launch in 1989, Mr. President.

Can we have a one-minute recess so I can show it to the Gentleman?

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is suspended, if there is no objection. *[There was none.]*

It was 5:35 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:37 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is resumed.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, may we request copies of the proposed program of improving the quality of students which is sought to be implemented in 1989, plus an analysis of the results of PRODED program. And since that was funded by the World Bank, we would like to know how this new program is going to be funded — budgetary alone or through some other agencies?

Senator Angara. As I understand it, Mr. President, the secondary education development program will be funded by a combination of budgetary support, grants-in-aid and a loan from the Asian Development Bank — one-third each. So one-third budgetary support, one-third

grants-in-aid, and one-third loan from the Asian Development Bank.

Senator Guingona. May we know how much is the loan?

Senator Angara. It is about \$60 million.

Senator Guingona. \$60 million?

Senator Angara. Because the total cost of the study is about \$200 million.

Senator Guingona. With those questions, we will await them, Mr. President, and introduce the necessary amendments at the proper time.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Any other interpellations? *[Silence]*

The Majority Floor Leader.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move for a suspension of the session.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is suspended, if there is no objection. *[There was none.]*

It was 5:39 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:41 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is resumed.

The Majority Floor Leader.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we close the period of interpellations.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Is there any objection? *[Silence]* Hearing none; the motion is approved.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, may I move for a suspension of the session.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda].

The session is suspended for a few minutes, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:41 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 6:08 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is resumed.

The Majority Floor Leader.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, earlier I made a motion, which was approved, to close the period of interpellations. I move that we reopen the period of interpellations to allow Senator Saguisag to pose some questions to the Sponsor.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Is there any objection? [*There was none.*] The motion is reconsidered and we are back in the period of interpellations.

Senator Saguisag is recognized.

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

Senator Angara. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. Mr. President, may we know if the Gentleman has read the editorial in the *Manila Bulletin* yesterday regarding free high schools?

Senator Angara. Yes, I have, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. With the permission of the Body, may I just read into the record just the first and last paragraphs of this editorial. May I proceed, Mr. President?

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Please do so.

Senator Saguisag. It states:

While the public has been assured that enrollment in the public high schools will be free, the wisdom of this move will continue to be questioned even by those who will be ostensibly benefited.

In time we will see that what appears to be free education will in fact be costly for the students and the nation.

The concern that I see in this editorial is that if we will immediately implement, across-the-board, from the first to the fourth years, this program beginning 1988-1989, do we not really risk the possibility of democratizing mediocrity, or, put another way, may we not be throwing in good money after bad?

Senator Angara. There is always a risk any government will face in making a social expenditure, Mr. President. But on balance, I am convinced that the money we are going to throw behind free high school would be money well-spent. Well, the editorial writer of *Bulletin* may have his own reasons for predicting that it would be bad money. But I am confident it will be good money well-spent, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. Yesterday, Mr. President, the distinguished Minority Floor Leader pointed out to us that all that Section 20 of Article XVIII of the Constitution states is that we, in the first Congress, should give priority to the determination of the period for the full implementation of free public secondary education. And in the debates in the Constitutional Commission, the period mentioned, in fact, even stretches to as long as 10 years. Since what is only asked of us is to determine the period, why are we rushing within a year of our existence a program for full implementation?

Senator Angara. The reason for that, Mr. President, is that, first, there is funding for it; second, there are teachers for it; third, while we do not have sufficient classrooms, the problem of classrooms will be provided; and fourth, the Department of Education Culture and Sports said that it is prepared to implement it. So I think all the ingredients for implementation are all there. So why not implement it this year? I will put it the other way. Why not implement it when all the preparations have been made?

Senator Saguisag. Mr. President, I wonder if in the study made to implement this, there has been enough inquiry made into the impact of implementing immediately in full the constitutional intent upon marginal private high schools.

I have talked with some people concerned in this sector. They are not able to increase their tuition precisely because of the existence of public high schools with which they compete. And they are afraid that the moment this is implemented, the number of students they have now, which allow them to keep their heads above the water, will go to the public schools. So, may we not be creating a problem where none exists now?

Senator Angara. Yes, the Gentleman is right that there will be a problem perhaps of bankrupting the marginal private high schools because of this program. One response to that, Mr. President, is the so-called educational service contracting, whereby the excess students in public schools would be diverted to the private schools. Of course, that is not a complete answer to the fiscal viability of the private school, but at least that will alleviate the financial plight of what the Gentleman termed "marginal private high schools."

Senator Saguisag. I wonder, Mr. President, if the Gentleman has come across a doctoral thesis of Fr. Benigno Benabarre which is called "Public Funds for Private Schools in a Democracy."

Senator Angara. Unfortunately not, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. The burden of this doctoral thesis, to me, is consistent with the intention of Section 2, subsection (3) of Article XIV, which says:

The State shall:

Establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged.

To sum up, Mr. President, the thesis of this book is that the task of educating is really a Government function. However, since Government cannot do it alone, the private sector comes in. But what happens is that a parent who sends a child of his to a private school, actually, is prejudiced twice. He spends for the education of his children in a private school; at the same time, he is taxed to subsidize those who are studying in the public schools. I wonder whether it is possible under this proposal — instead of the limited intent of the contracting plan, considering the language of the Constitution — to directly subsidize private schools under the scheme that we are trying to implement.

Senator Angara. I am glad the Gentleman mentioned that, Mr. President, because I personally believe in what he is proposing now, except that I have some doubts whether we can incorporate that principle into this free high school bill. But if the Gentleman will produce a bill that will provide for public subsidy to private education, I would be more than glad to cosponsor that with him, because I personally believe that it is about time we do that in this country, because in most other countries in the region that is the principle followed, subsidy to private education.

Senator Saguisag. Again, looking at the Constitutional Commission debates of August 29, 1986, page 81, what I gleaned from the same is that the intent of the Constitutional Commission is to free the pupil or maybe student is the more proper term, from any obligation except literally from expenses regarding pencil and paper. Is that our intent here?

Senator Angara. Basically, Mr. President, we kept that intent intact because the student will be freed of all fees except only where the fee exacted is because it is personal rather than institutional, like membership in a society in a school, or a publication fee.

Senator Saguisag. Are we going to answer for the uniforms of the students?

Senator Angara. No, because that is personal to the student, but we will be answering for the tuition fee, the laboratory fee, the athletic fee, the cultural fee, the library fee, and such.

Senator Saguisag. I saw some place here, Mr. President, that I think the intent was even to include the expenditure for uniforms. So our understanding is that the expenditure for uniforms, especially if we are going to spend for a student whom we will be sending to a private school, may not be something we can afford given the current budget that we have.

Senator Angara. The Gentleman is right, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. But otherwise, workbooks, laboratory fees, athletic fees, we will answer for, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. That is true.

Senator Saguisag. Now in Section 6 of the bill, I personally can accept that the term "nationalization," strictly speaking, is not imprecise or infelicitous. However, its connotation may not exactly capture the intent of what we want to do here. Sapagkat ang pagkakaintindi natin, pagna-nationalize is something na aagawin sa mga kontrol ng banyaga. So I was wondering whether in the period of amendments we can have a less scary term. I did not think that that technical term reflects what we intended to achieve here.

Senator Angara. We would welcome a more appropriate and suitable word in lieu of "nationalization," Mr. President. One reason we used the word "nationalization" was that it was the same word used in Executive Order No. 189 in nationalizing this.

Senator Saguisag. Yes. I concede it would be technically defensible, ngunit ang dating ay

medyo iba yata sa pagkakaintindi natin sa pangkaraniwan.

Now, coming to Section 7, I was wondering whether in delegating to the DECS the framing of the rules and regulations, we could be more specific as to the standards like the need, or rather, the bias in favor of the underprivileged or the potential of a particular student. I am just disturbed, Mr. President, that this may be challenged as an uncanalized and over broad delegation of powers. So may I again ask the Gentleman whether in the period of amendments we can be more specific as to what we might want to delegate.

Senator Angara. We will be happy to accept that kind of amendment, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. There is just one final, seemingly trivial point. I am not even sure whether I am correct in making this observation here, but this just may point up something about the quality of education we have today. And I am referring to Section 5, if we may step back. As I said, I am not even really sure myself what the answer should be. A very small point on grammar on line 25.

Does the Gentleman have any strong feeling either way whether after the word "avail", we should insert the word "himself"?

I will repeat the question, Mr. President. I do not want really to carp, so to speak, but I was thinking myself whether it says something about our education today — on line 25 of page 3, after the word "avail," is this not an instance where it should be followed by "himself" or "herself" or is this something that is correct in itself?

Senator Angara. This is the original language of the House, Mr. President.

Senator Saguisag. I know.

Senator Angara. So as a good grammarian, we would welcome the Gentleman's suggestion to restyle this language.

Senator Saguisag. As I said, I am not sure myself whether this is really reflexive or not. But it just says something that if we doubted this, it would mean that the Members of the House and maybe ourselves may not be sure of something that otherwise should be easily established where there is a good educational system. That would remind us of the good old days of the public high school of which I am a product and proud of it.

So those will be all, Mr. President, and I would like to thank the Gentleman from Aurora and Quezon.

Senator Angara. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Herrera. Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The Gentleman from Cebu, Senator Herrera, is recognized.

Senator Herrera. Thank you, Mr. President.

Will the Gentleman from Quezon yield to a few questions?

Senator Angara. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Herrera. First, Mr. President, I would just like to state for the purpose of the record that I support wholeheartedly free high school education, not just because there is a constitutional mandate on this matter, but I believe on the wisdom of the policy of the State.

Now my understanding during the debate is that it is not just a matter, Mr. President, of providing free high school or secondary education but also to provide a quality secondary education. So I wonder whether it is possible to develop or attain a certain degree of quality in high school education without first improving the quality of elementary education. And if this is so, then I think it is important to know whether the Department of Education, Culture and Sports has a program to this effect.

Senator Angara. Yes. As I stated in response to the question of Senator Guingona, Mr. President, on the elementary level there was this so-called PRODED program whereby the curriculum of the elementary education, the teachers' training, instructional materials and infrastructure were reviewed over a period of four years, I think. The first graduate of this new curriculum would be in 1988, this year, Mr. President. And so, we would tell whether the review was for the better or not by the end of this school year. So that was the effort of reforming the elementary level. There is going to be a program to review secondary education beginning 1989. And in the same manner as elementary education was reviewed; it will review the high school curriculum, the teachers' qualifications, instructional materials and infrastructure. So there is a concurrent effort at reviewing both the curriculum and the other components of quality while we are going to look into the infrastructure and the mechanics.

Senator Herrera. This kind of quality in secondary education that the program would like to attain, is this related to preparing the high school graduates to be integrated in the industries, or is this a preparation for college education? Now this is to me a very important issue because one of the justifications of this bill is that many of our students cannot afford to proceed to high school education.

Senator Angara. I think it is both, Mr. President. It prepares the student both academically and vocationally. Academically, in order to prepare him for college or university work. Vocationally, because he may decide not to go on to college or university. That is why he can immediately step into the job market. So the new review will aim to incorporate some technology-oriented courses into the high school curriculum.

Senator Herrera. Would the Gentleman

agree that one of the important thrusts is to prepare the students for absorption or for the eventual integration into the working world of the adult that there should be consultation between the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and the various industries so that the training programs of our schools are tailored to the needs of the industries?

Senator Angara. That is an excellent suggestion, Mr. President. And since the program will not be started until 1989, I assure the Gentleman that through our Committee on Education we will recommend very strongly to the DECS that when it launches the program, we should have very close cooperation and liaison with industry as the Gentleman suggested.

Senator Herrera. I do not know if this question was asked yesterday, but I would just like to know whether there are preparations in putting up high schools especially in rural areas because not all towns have high schools or private schools for that matter, so that students coming from these sectors of these areas may not have the opportunity to take advantage of the free high school education. And I think the poor students in the rural areas should be the primary target of this program.

Senator Angara. That was raised by Senator Maceda, Mr. President, but I am glad the Gentleman raised it again. Yes, under the plan, in fact, on year 2 of the program, the Budget for secondary education would jump from ₱700,000,000 to ₱1,700,000,000, precisely, to accommodate the construction of high schools in areas where there are none. So that is anticipated, Mr. President.

Senator Herrera. Finally, Mr. President, I would like to know how many new teachers this free secondary education program will be able to hire.

Senator Angara. Additional teachers, Mr. President, would be about 6000 new teachers.

Senator Herrera. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. Mr. President.

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

Senator Laurel. Mr. President, just a few questions I would like to propound to the distinguished Sponsor of this Senate Bill. This Committee Report No. 99, re: House Bill No. 2520 seeks to provide free public secondary education. Is that correct?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. And what is meant by the word "public"? Does that word "public" exclude secondary education offered by private schools? I want that to be very clear because it would seem that that is not too clear. Free public secondary education, does that mean this bill covers only education provided by the public secondary school system?

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. In other words, this does not include secondary education provided by private institutions?

Senator Angara. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. I see. And in that case, there is no need for service contracting where the public schools cannot accommodate the youth who would like to avail himself of the free public secondary education.

Senator Angara. There would be need for service contracting, Mr. President, as there will be not enough public classrooms to accommodate students who might want to go into public schools.

Senator Laurel. But then it is no longer covered by this bill because this bill provides for free public secondary education. Meaning,

education offered by the State.

Senator Angara. That is Mr. President, that service contracting is not covered by this bill.

Senator Laurel. I would like that clarified because our Constitution, in Section 4 of Article XIV, it says, and I quote: "The State recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system. . ." It recognizes that there are two types of education being offered in the country; and that is, one, by the public school system, and the second is the private school system, which are supposed to be complementary.

Now this bill seeks only to provide free public high school education to those entering in public schools.

Senator Angara. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. So we do not envisage here providing not only free but even assistance to those who enroll in private high schools.

Senator Angara. Not yet, Mr. President, but I foresee that the next logical step is for public subsidy to high school students enrolled in private schools as already initially intimated by Senator Saguisag. That should be the next logical step.

Senator Laurel. In other words, this bill does not seek to provide even assistance to those who enroll or might be forced to enroll in private high schools because there is no space available in public high schools.

Senator Angara. No, it does not provide public subsidy to those enrolled in private schools.

Senator Laurel. Does that mean, Mr. President, that the service contracting with private high schools need not be provided for?

Senator Angara. It is already provided for

under existing administrative regulation of the DECS through the educational service contracting.

Senator Laurel. May I ask for a few minutes suspension, Mr. President?

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Before we suspend, may I just state for clarification that it is not only provided by administrative scheme. It is actually authorized by the General Appropriations Act because of the approval of a corresponding appropriation for service contracting.

Senator Laurel. Precisely, Mr. President, that is why I raised a question.

Senator Angara. I stand corrected.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator Laurel. Can we have a few minutes suspension?

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is suspended, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 6:37 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 6:46 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The session is resumed.

If there are no other interpellations, the Majority Floor Leader.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, the President Pro Tempore has a question.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Well, considering he is the President Pro Tempore, we cannot deny him one last question.

Senator Guingona. Now I just want to know under present existing practices, what are these conditions, certain conditions for eligibility embodied in these standards?

Senator Angara. I am sorry, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. Under present practice, since this eligibility and excess students are already provided for under service contracts, what are these certain conditions embodied in No. 1? Eligibility?

Senator Angara. It means, Mr. President, that the school willing to participate must accept the cost suggested by the DECS. For instance, if the going rate in the community is ₱500 per student, then the school must accept that that is the going rate.

Senator Guingona. But I thought that the subsidy was up to ₱1000 and the difference will be shouldered by the student himself.

Senator Angara. The subsidy is up to ₱1000, but if the cost of the tuition is lower than ₱1000, that is only the actual cost that the government will give. Now, if it exceeded ₱1000, then the difference must be shouldered by the student or his parents.

Senator Guingona. So if the DECS says, "you must accept this tuition," the private institution must accept it.

Senator Angara. It does not have to if it does not like it, Mr. President; but to be able to participate in the program it must abide by the determination of the DECS.

Senator Guingona. But one criterion is geographic nearness, proximity — and supposing that is the only private institution in that geographical area, how then will the problem be resolved?

Senator Angara. Then, it will be chosen because the alternative is no school at all so . . .

Senator Guingona. And there are no extra costs to the private institution. Assuming that it is much more than the tuition that the DECS wants and other fees and it is the only institution there, will the excess student have to shoulder the difference?

Senator Angara. That is true, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Angara. Thank you.

Senator Laurel. Mr. President.

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

Senator Laurel. Mr President, I am sorry, I was not able to continue with my interpellations. I simply asked for a suspension of the session. So may I continue?

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Please do so.

Senator Laurel. After conferring with the Sponsor of the bill under discussion, I have decided not to press the matter which I raised. However, giving up the idea which I suggested, together with Senator Saguisag, because we believe that the idea that there must be some assistance provided that should be given to private schools is something that is worthy of consideration since private schools are also discharging a public function.

However, I would like to touch another matter covered by this sheet of paper provided us which is the educational service contracting, selection guidelines, which I understand is already being implemented, in a way, by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. According to this, Mr. President, surveys and meetings are conducted by the regional project committees to identify prospective participating private schools. That is for the purpose of service contracting. The basic criteria for eligibility are the following:

1. Willingness, subject to certain conditions that were raised already by Senator Guingona.
2. Proximity. It is geographically accessible to the area to be serviced.

I would like to know from the distinguished Sponsor, Mr. President, what is meant by geographically accessible.

Senator Angara. It is closest to the place of residence of the students, as I understand it.

Senator Laurel. Does this mean proximity?

Senator Angara. Physical proximity, yes.

Senator Laurel. And proximity is a very relative term, Mr. President, particularly if we go to the barrios or to the barangays, to the rural areas. How about if the distance between the center of the town and the private school is about five kilometers or three kilometers. Would we say that is geographically accessible?

Senator Angara. As the Gentleman says, it is relative. Perhaps in the City of Manila, five kilometers would be quite distant but perhaps in the town of Baler, that would be quite proximate or close.

Senator Laurel. If the idea that we should provide books to the students enrolled in high schools may be shouldered by the Government, I think the distinguished Sponsor of this bill is agreeable for the Government to shoulder the cost of books, how about the cost of travelling to attend geographically accessible high schools? Would the Gentleman consider that as something that the Government could bear?

Senator Angara. Mr. President, let me clarify first of all about textbooks. I am sorry if the Gentleman construed my statement as saying that the Government would provide free textbooks. No, the Government will not provide free textbooks. What it will provide is a textbook but at nominal rental free. And the reason I already explained yesterday is because the Government wants to charge this nominal fee in order to ensure the continuity of the textbook provision to the students.

Now, can Government afford to shoulder travelling expense for the student? I think that

is an idea that we ought to aim at but frankly, I do not see how Government resources can meet the travelling cost of students.

Senator Laurel. Thank you.

Now, number 3 is quality of instruction in track record which is known or accepted as possessing standards comparable to or better than a neighboring public school. Well, it was stated by the distinguished Sponsor in the course of his sponsorship speech the fact that barangay high schools have rather low standards. So, it is quite easy for private schools in the same area to be better than such schools.

Senator Angara. That is highly possible, Mr. President.

Senator Laurel. Number 4, it is willing to waive the use of traditionally rigid standards of admission. Well, that point has been raised already, commented upon by previous interpellators, so I will not touch that.

Now it turns out here that there are two stages in the selection of private schools eligible to participate in the education service contracting scheme. The first is that on the basis of the four criteria just mentioned, there is a final or second stage which is selection criteria. After eligibility, we have the final selection based on the following: (1) Capacity. — It has physical capacity and managerial capability to accommodate additional students. Physical capacity — I suppose this is a factual condition that can be verified easily. Managerial capability is something else. It could be rather subjective. But then, again, number 2 is cost. Its per-student cost is comparable to or cheaper than the per capita cost of a neighboring public school. Actually, we will be choosing schools with rather lower standards because the cost — it says here "comparable to or cheaper" — and when we say "cheaper," it is difficult to imagine a school that has higher standard or better standard that we would desire if it is cheaper to

attend that school. Because I do not know that we can rise higher than the source which is the tuition in order to be able to provide better instruction.

Senator Angara. I think the Gentleman is literally and strictly correct in his interpretation. May I suggest that when selecting the neighboring public school, I guess the intent here is not to pick the low quality neighboring public school but the neighboring public school of comparative quality instruction as the private high school. So I suppose when the Gentleman says that its per student cost is comparable, it does not mean it is identical or similar. It is comparable. That means it can be more than what is charged by the public high school, but reasonably within limit.

Senator Laurel. Thank you.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. The Chair is wondering if . . .

Senator Laurel. I was going to continue, Mr. President, probably anticipating what the Chair would be stating, and that is I could go on to selection of students. But I suppose all these data or guidelines would be rather tangential or out of context in the light of this statement that this has no bearing on the bill that we are discussing.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda]. Yes, the Chair, probably, would also like to join the Gentleman from Batangas and Senator Saguisag in drafting a bill subsidy and service contracting. At which point, this discussion would really be more relevant.

Senator Laurel. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President Officer [Senator Maceda]. Thank you.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we close the period of interpellations.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Maceda].

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

Are there any speeches for or in favor of the bill? [*Silence*] There being none, the motion is approved.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2528

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

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

SPECIAL ORDERS

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I move that we transfer to the Calendar for Special Orders the following Senate Bills: Senate Bill No. 314, entitled

AN ACT ORGANIZING THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION FOR THE CORDILLERAS, DESCRIBING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

and Committee Report No. 164 on Senate Bill No. 431, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY OF FREEDOM FROM NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROVIDED IN THE CONSTITUTION AND DECLARING UNLAWFUL CERTAIN ACTS IN VIOLATION OF THE SAID POLICY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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

ADJOURNMENT OF THE SESSION

Senator Mercado. I move that we adjourn