

RECORD OF THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1992

OPENING OF THE SESSION

At 3:14 p.m., the Honorable Neptali A. Gonzales, President of the Senate, called the session to order.

The President: Binubuksan ang ika-38 pagpupulong ng Senado. Tayo ay tumindig at pangungunahan tayo sa panalangin ni Senador Raul S. Roco.

Everybody remained standing for the opening prayer.

PRAYER

Senator Roco:

Lord,

Give us fortitude in our studies,
lucidity in our speeches,
purity in our intentions,
fidelity to our trust,
generosity to our people,
wisdom in our judgments,
and humility in our self-assessments--

that we may be an instrument of Your peace,
and a servant of Your people.

Amen.

ROLL CALL

The President: Babasahin ng Kalihim ng Senado ang talaan ng mga Senador.

The Secretary:

Senator Heherson T. Alvarez	Present
Senator Edgardo S. Angara	Present*
Senator Agapito A. Aquino	Present*
Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon	Present
Senator Anna Dominique M.L. Coseteng..	**
Senator Teofisto T. Guingona, Jr.	Present
Senator Ernesto F. Herrera	Present
Senator Jose D. Lina, Jr.	Present*
Senator Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	Present
Senator Ernesto M. Maceda	Present
Senator Orlando S. Mercado	Present

*Arrived after the roll call

**On Official mission

Senator Blas F. Ople	Present*
Senator John H. Osmeña	Present
Senator Santanina T. Rasul	Present
Senator Ramon B. Revilla	Present
Senator Raul S. Roco	Present
Senator Alberto G. Romulo	Present
Senator Leticia R. Shahani	Present*
Senator Vicente C. Sotto III	Present
Senator Wigberto E. Tañada	Present
Senator Francisco S. Tatad	Present
Senator Arturo Tolentino	Present*
Senator Freddie Webb	Present*
The President	Present

The President: Sixteen Senators having answered the roll call, the Chair declares the existence of a quorum.

THE JOURNAL

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we dispense with the reading of the *Journal* of yesterday's session and consider the same as approved.

The President: Is there any objection to the said motion? [Silence] There being none, the motion is hereby approved.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

BILLS ON FIRST READING

The Secretary: Senate Bill No. 941, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING THAT THE INCOME TAX RETURN SHALL BE THE SOLE BASIS FOR DETERMINING THE FINANCIAL CAPACITY OF A CREDIT APPLICANT BY BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR ANY VIOLATION THEREFOR, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION SEVENTY-SIX OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBERED THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVEN, AS AMENDED.

Introduced by Senator Herrera.

The President: Referred to the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Ways and Means.

The Secretary: Senate Bill No. 942, entitled

AN ACT REQUIRING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENT OWNED

Act, the DECS in consultation with the DILG, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), and the different local government units (LGUs) shall come out with the list of priority areas.

SEC. 5. Functions of the Barangay Reading Center. - The barangay reading centers shall offer the following services:

a) It shall make available to the members of the community reading materials of wide array, including local and national newspapers of general circulation and others;

b) It shall offer remedial reading classes for members of the community;

c) It shall be used as a venue for audio-visual presentation in the community and other kinds of exhibitions and activities aimed at increasing the literacy rate by government agencies, non-governmental organizations or private entities in the dissemination of information of general interest;

d) It shall offer such other services as may be in furtherance of this Act.

SEC. 6. Funding. - The amount needed for the establishment, operation, maintenance of city and municipal libraries and barangay reading centers throughout the country shall be included in the appropriation of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) under the annual General Appropriations Act: *Provided*, That funds for the establishment of city or municipal libraries and barangay reading centers shall be given priority in the use of savings to be realized from any debt reduction programs of Government.

SEC. 7. Submission of Reports. - Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, and at the end of every calendar quarter thereafter, the Secretary of the DECS shall submit progress reports to each House of Congress on the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 8. Rules and Regulations. - The Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the effective

implementation of this Act.

SEC. 9. Repealing Clause. - All acts, presidential decrees, executive orders and issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 10. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or inoperative, the other provision not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 11. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, for the sponsorship speech, I ask that the distinguished Gentle Lady from Sulu and Mindanao, Senator Santanina Rasul, be recognized.

The President: Senator Rasul is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR RASUL

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, in terms of statistics, the Filipino people appear to be highly literate. The latest estimate of the National Statistics Office is that we have a literacy rate of 95.54 percent.

This figure, taken at face value, hides one sordid fact: Most Filipinos, Mr. President, either do not read or have poorly developed reading habits. There are indicators to point this out such as recent newspaper items showing the relatively small circulation of newspapers, particularly the provincial newspapers.

The Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media revealed that only 35.8 percent of people surveyed are exposed to books; 32.9 percent to newspapers. Also, cursory data from existing public and private libraries indicate that the preponderance of those visiting these libraries are students, researchers and a small number of professionals; hardly any are from among ordinary people.

This problem, Mr. President, is exacerbated by the fact that there are very few libraries to which people have access. The 80 percent of our people who live in the rural areas hardly touch a book or a newspaper after leaving school. Even a good number of professionals, including teachers, are not in the habit of reading as much as they should. More often than not, people read only because they are required to read.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that the actual number of illiterates or dysfunctional literates is quite sizeable. In 1990, the number of illiterates was 2,846,120, and the number of dysfunctional literates was in the neighborhood of roughly 16,000,000.

There is now a growing movement to combat illiteracy and to eliminate it by the year 2000. Many organizations have become concerned by a recent announcement of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, to the effect that it will take 110 years from now to eradicate illiteracy in the Philippines if the work is done by the government alone through its existing programs.

In order to accelerate the promotion of functional literacy which should mean not only the ability to read, write and understand what one reads but also to utilize one's knowledge for productive and other useful ends, there is an urgent need to provide various ways by which people could be made increasingly more functionally literate.

I submit, Mr. President, that a potent way to do this is to establish libraries and reading centers in all cities, municipalities and barangays throughout the Philippines, except in places where there are already existing libraries. This would be a concrete action point which will definitely increase access to reading materials by all Filipinos.

It is, therefore, with an abiding concern that I now sponsor Senate Bill No. 925 which will, in effect, consolidate three bills of the same substance, namely, Senate Bill Nos. 38, 118 and 401, introduced earlier by Senators Edgardo Angara, Alberto Romulo and myself. The consolidated bill has been studied thoroughly by the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture consisting of 16 regular and three ex officio members. This consolidated bill will provide for the establishment of city and municipal libraries and barangay reading centers throughout the country.

Such libraries and reading centers are to be established on the basis of a program to be prepared by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in coordination with the development council of each city, municipality or barangay. It is stipulated that funds for the operation and maintenance of libraries will be shared equally between the National Government and the city or municipality, while funds for barangay reading centers will be shared on a 40:60 ratio between the city or the municipality and the barangay concerned. Each city, municipality or barangay will be mandated to provide a suitable site.

As for the overall national implementation plan, it is

expected that the libraries will be constructed within a period of five years with priority to be given to barangays in isolated rural areas.

The functions of the libraries and reading centers will include (a) making available a wide variety of local and national newspapers; (b) offering of remedial reading classes for community members; (c) serving as venue for audio-visual presentations, exhibitions and community activities; and (d) providing such services as may promote the purposes of this Act.

The enactment of this bill will certainly bring closer to our people information of importance to them, the latest knowledge from all sources relevant to the improvement of their life and, consequently, a more speedy acceleration of the development of an increasingly better quality of life. It will also make more real the promise of our government to bring about people empowerment through an enlightened citizenry, thereby establishing a strong basis for social and economic stability, prosperity, and peace.

Mr. President, I, therefore, enjoin my Colleagues to give their approval to Senate Bill No. 925.

Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senate Romulo: Mr. President, may I ask for a one-minute suspension of the session.

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

It was 3:30 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 3:30 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President: The session is resumed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 925

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 until tomorrow.

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