

RECORD OF THE SENATE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1992

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 10:42 a.m., the session was resumed with the Honorable Neptali A. Gonzales, President of the Senate, presiding.

The President: The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

BILL ON SECOND READING Senate Bill No. 925--Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers (Continuation)

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 as reported out under Committee Report No. 33.

The President: Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: The sponsorship speech has already been delivered by the Author and Sponsor, Senator Rasul. We are now in the period of interpellations.

I ask that the distinguished Senator from Mindanao and Sulu, Senator Rasul, be recognized.

For the first interpellation, Mr. President, the Minority Leader, Senator Guingona, wishes to interpellate the Sponsor.

The President: Senator Guingona, the Minority Leader, is recognized for purposes of interpellation.

Senator Guingona: Mr. President, will the distinguished Lady Senator from Mindanao yield for some questions?

Senator Rasul: With pleasure, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona: I believe we enacted a Library Bill in 1988 or in 1989, did we not?

Senator Rasul: I am not familiar with that, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona: I remember that we did. And I believe it was enacted into law. My question is: How does that Library Law enactment relate to this present bill that the Gentle Lady is sponsoring?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, during the last Congress, we actually sponsored a number of bills establishing municipal libraries, barangay reading centers, city libraries, but when the Congress adjourned, these bills were not enacted into law. Some time in 1949, a law establishing libraries was passed but I cannot recall the short detail.

The purpose of this consolidated bill which incorporates actually three bills filed by Senator Romulo, Senator Angara, and this humble Representation, is to consolidate the establishment of reading centers, as well as libraries all over the country. Statistics show that Filipinos generally have not established good reading habits so that unless the facility is available, they will never want to take hold of a book, go out of their way to borrow a book or read a newspaper. This is one of the reasons why our literacy level has remained low. The enactment of Senate Bill No. 925 into law will institutionalize the reading habits of Filipinos, especially in the rural and the grassroots area where a reading facility is truly necessary.

There are libraries in the urban centers, Mr. President, but not all municipalities have this facility. It is the intention of this bill to see to it that within a span of five years, all municipalities and barangays will have a reading center of their own.

Senator Guingona: Who has the responsibility of putting up the reading center?

Senator Rasul: In the case of municipal and city libraries, Mr. President, 50 percent of the cost will be shared by the National Government and the other 50 percent by the municipal and the city governments. In the case of the barangay reading centers, 40 percent will be taken care of by the municipality or city, and 60 percent by the component barangay.

Senator Guingona: Does this entail a new building?

Senator Rasul: Not necessarily, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona: There are barangay centers. Can the reading center not be accommodated in the barangay center?

Senator Rasul: Some barangay centers can also accommodate reading centers, in which case the infrastructure would not be necessary. It is in areas where there are no infrastructures at all that the establishment or the construction of a reading center becomes top priority.

Senator Guingona: There are also barangay day care centers. Would the Sponsor agree to having all of these in one building?

Senator Rasul: The barangay day care center, Mr. President, performs a different function. I would like to think that a barangay hall or a barangay office would be more aligned with the function of the barangay reading center than a barangay day care center which has to do with children, feeding of children, taking care of children, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona: Since this is a local concern, why should we not allow the barangay, the municipal, the city or the province to take care of its own problem rather than having a law for them?

Senator Rasul: Theoretically, Mr. President, that should be the case; but local governments, in many instances, have to be assisted, especially since a number of them are in no position to put up facilities such as this. There should be some direction given so that the local governments can also hew closely to the objective or the purpose of having the facilities so that, ultimately, the habits which the reading center seeks to establish will become second nature to the local community.

Senator Guingona: Once the center is established, who will spend for the reading materials and the books?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, local government's donation can also take care of the reading materials.

Senator Guingona: Who will be in charge of this, the local government or the national government?

Senator Rasul: The local government concerned, Mr. President, will have responsibility for maintaining these reading centers.

Senator Guingona: Yes, but I understand that the Department of Interior will be there to ensure that the center will be created. The Department of Education, Culture and Sports is also involved in the coordination. And so with the Philippine Information Agency. There are so many agencies involved that we may not be able to pinpoint accountability.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, in view of the fact that it will take an enormous amount to put up reading centers and municipal libraries all over the country, there has to be prioritization. That is where the DILG, the Department of Public Works and Highways and the other entities will come in. They will prepare a list that will prioritize the areas where the reading centers and municipal libraries will be established.

Senator Guingona: Thank you, Mr. President.

The President: Is there any further interpellation?

Senator Lina: Mr. President.

The President: Senator Lina is recognized for purposes of interpellation.

Senator Lina: Thank you, Mr. President.

Will the distinguished Senator from Mindanao yield for some questions?

Senator Rasul: Certainly, to the Benjamin of the Senate.

Senator Lina: Thank you very much.

May we know, Mr. President, the estimated amount that the government will have to prepare to implement this law?

Senator Rasul: This bill, Mr. President, did not include a specific amount to fund the construction and operations of the reading centers--the libraries. But within five years, the intentment of the bill is to have all of these in place, and the construction will come from the savings of the government.

Senator Lina: There is a provision in Section 6, Mr. President, that the 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 the government.

May we know, Mr. President, if there is any clear sign of a debt reduction program of the government that will result into savings?

Senator Rasul: By the end of the fiscal year, Mr. President, we will know how much savings we will have from debt reduction programs.

Senator Lina: Will the establishment of the barangay reading center necessitate the employment of personnel like librarians, Mr. President?

Senator Rasul: As a matter of course, they will need someone to take care of the reading center.

Senator Lina: Is it possible, Mr. President, that the teachers in the community could be given extra time or could be asked to render extra time to help manage the barangay reading center with corresponding allowances? Because, right now, I do not think we have enough professional or trained librarians who can man 42,000 barangay reading centers. So we will have a problem manning these barangay centers with the necessary trained personnel. And since the teachers are

there available and we also lack teachers, Mr. President, it will be difficult to have the required personnel manning these barangay reading centers.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, actually that would be ideal. The teacher has the training, and if the teacher is based in the community where he is teaching, he would be the ideal person to look after the library. But then, since the teacher has a teaching job, he will be performing his job outside of the reading center, in which case somebody, maybe an assistant, really has to be at the reading center. In any case, this is a responsibility of the local governments and, perhaps, the local school board can look into this matter, Mr. President. Besides, not all barangays have schools or classrooms or even teachers, in which case, there really is a need to look for somebody who can be trained to take care of the reading center. But, if possible, a teacher who has spare time would be the ideal person to man the reading center.

Senator Lina: Funding, Mr. President, will come from the National Government for the establishment of the barangay reading centers, as I can glean from Section 6 of this proposed legislation.

Senator Rasul: Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Lina: Will this be a permanent arrangement, Mr. President, that every year in the General Appropriations Act the National Government will provide for the funding of this project?

Senator Rasul: Initially, Mr. President, I suppose the National Government will have to assist. As a matter of fact, the operations of some local government units, in fact, are subsidized by the National Government. So I can imagine that the establishment of a reading center would really need the support of the National Government.

Senator Lina: Will the distinguished Sponsor have, at least, the estimate of how much it would cost to operate one barangay reading center, including the cost of the books, periodicals, the minimum number that is required to have a viable barangay reading center? Has there been a study made to this effect, Mr. President, since this a new activity or project? Does the Sponsor have an idea of how much it would cost a standard or minimum viable barangay reading center?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, the funding will be on a case-to-case basis. There are local government units which are more advanced, in which case, the materials would also reflect the needs of the community. But there are local governments in the rural areas where not enough people really can

read these highly technical books or even the newspapers, in which case, the materials that should be made available to the reading centers should be those which are relevant to their needs and the materials that really they can understand.

Let us take, for example, isolated island barangay where hardly anyone has graduated from high school. It would not be logical to put technical books in the library. Perhaps newspapers and simple books on how to do things will be relevant to the needs of that barangay.

Senator Lina: Mr. President, during the last Congress, we passed a law establishing barangay day-care centers; however, until now, the implementation of the same is stalled because of lack of funding. The establishment of barangay day-care centers is also charged to the National Government. The objective of that law is very laudable--to establish a barangay day-care center in all barangays of the country starting with the most depressed barangay.

I am just concerned, Mr. President, that with the lack of appropriate funding, this laudable project will again not be implemented, thereby frustrating the hope of our people who are looking forward to a library, whether in the city or municipality or even in the barangay.

Even now, Mr. President, the various local government units in the country are asking for the suspension of the devolution of certain powers to them because of the problem of funding. I just wanted to air this concern so that when we do pass this law, we are aware of the difficulties that may lie ahead, especially in the area of funding and, therefore, call upon the revenue-raising agencies of the government to really attend to the tasks so that beautiful projects such as this one we are considering right now will be implemented in case this bill is enacted into law.

Thank you very much.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, that is precisely the reason we have provided here a five-year period during which this law will be implemented. And it is precisely because of lack of resources that we cannot immediately establish reading centers in all the 42,000 barangays. But the establishment of reading centers will be by phases and priority will be given to those depressed and far-flung areas.

In any case, there are existing entities which can be tapped to fund these reading centers.

Senator Lina: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President.

The President: Senator Mercado is recognized.

Senator Mercado: I would like to, first of all, agree with the intent of the measure. I think it is appropriate that it is sponsored by a Senator who has devoted many years of her life in teaching our people to read through the "Magbasa Kita" pioneering program in the past.

Mr. President, I have a few questions about this measure.

First is, do we have an estimate of how much this program would cost? How much will it cost to establish reading centers all over the country in the various barangays in a period of five years?

Senator Rasul: As I said earlier, Mr. President, the cost will be on a case-to-case basis. It will depend on the program which will be prepared by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. The program, of course, will depend on the level of literacy and needs of the particular community.

We have not gone into the costing. It will depend on how the Department of Education, Culture and Sports looks at the functions that the particular library or reading center will perform in the particular community.

I suppose local governments which have no reading centers at all will need more funds than one that already have one in existence but which does not truly perform the functions of a reading center.

This, of course, will depend on what amount the Department of Education, Culture and Sports would deem appropriate for a particular community or local government.

Senator Mercado: We do not have even a ballpark figure of how much this entire program would cost?

Senator Rasul: We have not yet come out with an estimate of that, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Would not the first logical step in establishing a program like this is to have the baseline data, and determine the need through a survey so that we can identify how much costs will be incurred by way of materials and infrastructure?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, the costing will actually come after the enabling act is already approved, and the DECS can go into a program to determine how much a particular

municipality or barangay will need to establish a credible and useful reading center.

Senator Mercado: Do we have an estimate of how much a reading center or a public library would cost?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, during the last Congress, when we were discussing the bill that we earlier filed as to the cost of a barangay reading center, the then Director for Non-formal Education, Dr. Romulo, quoted a very minimal figure of P50,000 for the construction of a barangay reading center. He did not envision costing the reading materials that will go into the reading center.

Roughly, Mr. President, perhaps P100,000 would be a very safe figure for a reading center with reading materials.

Senator Mercado: If we put the unit cost of a reading center at P100,000, how many barangays, in the Gentle Lady's estimation, would be needing such reading centers to be established in their community?

Senator Rasul: The Department of Education, Culture and Sports will determine the priority areas that will need barangay reading centers established ahead of the others. Naturally, the depressed and underdeveloped areas will be given priority to have their reading centers established ahead of the others.

Senator Mercado: How many barangays are there in the country today?

Senator Rasul: There are 42,000 barangays, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: As the Lady has stated earlier, not all communities require the establishment of reading centers. How many of these 42,000 barangays, in her estimation, would need the establishment of an infrastructure that would constitute a barangay library or a reading center and would cost P100,000 to build including the reading materials?

Senator Rasul: Based on our observation of the areas that we have visited, Mr. President, most barangays do not have any reading center really. So I would say two-thirds of the 42,000 barangays do not have any reading centers.

Senator Mercado: Two-thirds of 42,000 barangays would be 27,720. If we multiply this by P100,000, it will amount to P2,772,000,000. This is not a small appropriation even if this is spread over a period of five years.

Senator Rasul: Yes, Mr. President. It really amounts to a big sum. That is the reason it has to be done in phases. It has to be over a period of time so it does not unnecessarily overburden the government even if the objective is noble and laudable.

Senator Mercado: Has a study been done on the target market, meaning, the communities that will use it? How many have expressed the need for a barangay reading center? How many, in a pilot survey, for example, would indicate that they would use a barangay reading center? If one is established, how much would the reading materials cost, what type of books and what language would they be printed in?

We have just passed a measure hoping to breathe life to the publishing industry. The state of the publication industry in this country is dismal. This would pose some serious problems with regard to the software that is going to be used. How does the Sponsor propose to deal with this particular problem?

Senator Rasul: Even the book industry that was approved recently also foresees the establishment of reading centers all over the country. That is precisely the reason the Department of Education, Culture and Sports should be the entity that would determine the areas, the prioritization, as well as the funds to be used, because they would have the technical expertise on these matters, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, I will go straight to the point as regards my apprehension.

We have in the past been establishing 10-bed hospitals through measures that have been filed in the House of Representatives. There are a great number of 10-bed hospitals up to this day that do not have doctors, neither do they have nurses. There are no medicines available. We have a lot of health centers that are lacking in personnel and medical supplies.

Here we are, we are going to establish reading centers in each barangay at the cost of P100,000. We might be proposing an engineering solution to a problem that should not be solved by infrastructure. There are many barangays center all over the country. Maybe, what they would need to start of would be some shelves and some reading materials that would not cost very much.

We are not too sure about the market, Mr. President. We are not too sure whether these barangay reading centers will be used by the people. We do not have a survey as regards the market. Or an estimate of costs. We sometimes try to just throw some money at the problem to put up a structure. Then

we have something literally concrete as a solution to the problem. But is it not more logical for us to start small? Anyway, almost all barangays have barangay halls with some reading materials. Why not help them put up shelves and supply them with reading materials? Then we can put up libraries or reading centers later.

I am afraid that we must really go into a serious study of our people's reading needs, and not proceed into a solution that might cost a lot of money without data. We lack baseline, empirical data to guide us in making this decision.

That is my apprehension, Mr. President.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, that situation which was just pictured, I think, stems from the fact that there are too many reading centers and libraries in Metro Manila. So the residents of a barangay would rather go to a library that is better equipped than the ones with limited titles or materials for reading.

This would not happen in an area where there are no reading centers at all. Anything that will be in the library will really be used by the people in the area because there is no other place to go, if one wanted to read something.

I believe that no study is really needed to determine the need for reading centers. One has just to look at the figures on illiteracy to show the need, to indicate the need for reading centers. And as I have indicated earlier, there are some barangay halls which are big enough to accommodate reading centers, in which case there is really no need to put up another infrastructure. But I think there are more barangays without any barangay halls at all, in which case there is really a need to put up a reading center.

Senator Mercado: If we want to improve the reading habits, if we want our people to be more literate, I think the first approach should be to provide our barangays all over the country with reading materials. Let us not put up a reading center first, then wait for the response afterwards. Let us proceed with a certain amount of science and certainty where the reading centers should be established.

This may become a blanket authority to establish projects which may end up the same way our 10-bed hospitals have ended, without doctors and, as a consequence, without patients. Small white elephants, if I may, in the various barangays.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, I am afraid I did not make myself clear on this matter. I think I said that establishing a

reading center does not mean that we really have to put up an infrastructure when one already exists, as, for example, in an existing barangay hall which is big enough to accommodate a library or a reading center. It is only when there is none that there is a need to put up a modest, a small infrastructure where people can congregate and read and where we can keep the newspapers and magazines which should be supplied to the barangays.

And I do not think it is always necessary to put up a structure when one already exists. That will be a waste of resources, Mr. President. But I do not think that we will have that kind of a situation in the rural areas because, as we go farther down to the rural areas, we rarely see any infrastructure at all, even infrastructures made of indigenous materials that we could call a reading center.

Mr. President, the cost of a reading center will be more than compensated by the fact that we encourage people to congregate, discuss issues, read about what is going on not just within their own barangay but outside of their municipalities. I think the need to have this more than justifies the cost of establishing these reading centers.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, I am afraid that under this particular measure, we might just be given the blanket authority to put up that structure in every barangay. That would be the route that will be followed. As I said, there seems to be very little empirical data or cognitive inputs with regard to the barangays. We have not even surveyed how many barangays would need just shelves.

The other thing is, who will provide the materials? Who would decide what the materials would be? This is going to be a continuing program. The library is not the structure. It is the books, the reading materials that make the library attractive. What costs will be entailed in such a program? Have we projected what will be the maintenance cost on a yearly basis?

Senator Rasul: We leave the costing, the preparation of the programs, as well as the prioritization to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, Mr. President. Of course, there is the local school board that will look into the matter.

Senator Mercado: I just wanted to point that out, Mr. President. As I said, we have a tendency to have engineering solutions to problems that may not require the said engineering solutions.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President.

The President: The Majority Leader is recognized.

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

The President: Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, the period of interpellations is hereby closed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 925

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, in order that the Committee amendments, if any, can be prepared, I move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 under Committee Report No. 33.

The President: Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 is hereby suspended.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, before we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 929, the Rent Control Law, may I ask for a two-minute suspension of the session so that we can greet the Author of this bill, Senator Freddie Webb, a happy birthday.

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

It was 11:23 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 11:27 a.m., the session was resumed.

The President: The session is resumed.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

BILL ON SECOND READING Senate Bill No. 929--Rent Control Law (Continuation)

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 929 as reported out under Committee Report No. 34.

The President: Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 929 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, we have already approved the committee and individual amendments. We now have the clean copies which were distributed to the Members this morning. So we are now prepared to vote on Second Reading on Senate Bill No. 929.

The President: Is there any objection?

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, may I just 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 11:28 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 11:29 a.m., the session was resumed.

The President: The session is resumed.

APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 929 ON SECOND READING, AS AMENDED

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we now vote on Senate Bill No. 929 on Second Reading, as amended.

Senator Osmeña: Mr. President.

The President: Senator Osmeña is recognized.

Senator Osmeña: Mr. President, in accordance with law and the rules of the Chamber, I would like to abstain and make a disclosure of interest because my family has extensive rental problems.

Senator Tolentino: Mr. President.

The President: Senator Tolentino is recognized.

Senator Tolentino: Mr. President, I would just like to manifest that I abstain from voting because I have some shares in a corporation involved in real estate, which rents some properties.

The President: Make that of record as well as the remarks of Senator Osmeña.

We shall now vote on the bill, as amended, on Second

Reading.

As many as are in favor of the bill, as amended, will please say *Aye*. *[Several Senators: Aye]* As many as are against will please say *Nay*. *[Silence]* Senate Bill No. 929, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I would also like to make of record that I abstain from voting.

Senator Rasul: Mr. President.

The President: We have here Senator Santanina Rasul who is claiming recognition. What is the pleasure of the Lady Senator from the South?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, in view of the fact that we also have properties which are being rented, I would like to abstain from voting.

The President: Let that be entered in the *Record*.

BILL ON SECOND READING Senate Bill No. 925--Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers (Continuation)

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 as reported out under Committee Report No. 33.

The President: Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 925 is now in order.

Senator Rasul: We are now in the period of Committee amendments, if any. I ask that the Author and Sponsor, Senator Santanina Rasul, be recognized.

The President: Are there any Committee amendments?

Senator Rasul: Mr. President, there are no Committee amendments.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, since there are no Committee amendments, I move that we close the period of Committee amendments.

The President: Is there any objection? *[Silence]* There being none, the period of Committee amendments is hereby closed.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator 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 11:31 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 11:32 a.m., the session was resumed.

The President: The session is resumed.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION
OF SENATE BILL NO. 925**

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, in order to give the Members time to prepare their individual amendments, I move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 925.

The President: Is there any objection? [*Silence*] There being none, further consideration of the bill is hereby suspended.

**BILL ON SECOND READING
Senate Bill No. 32--Increasing Fines and
Penalties for Tax Evasion
(Continuation)**

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we now resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 32 as reported out under Committee Report No. 7.

The President: Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 32 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, we are in the period of individual amendments. I ask that the Sponsor, Senator Ernesto Herrera, be recognized.

The President: The distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, Senator Ernesto Herrera, is hereby recognized.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I understand there are no individual amendments; therefore, I move that we close the period of individual amendments.

The President: Is there any objection? [*Silence*] There

being none, the period of individual amendments on Senate Bill No. 32 is hereby closed.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

Senator 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 11:33 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

After a few seconds, the session was resumed.

The President: The session is resumed.

**APPROVAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 32
ON SECOND READING**

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we vote on Senate Bill No. 32 on Second Reading.

The President: We shall now vote on the bill on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor of the bill will please say Aye. [*Several Senators: Aye*] As many as are against will please say Nay. [*Silence*]

Accordingly, Senate Bill No. 32 is hereby approved on Second Reading.

SPECIAL ORDERS

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I ask that we now transfer to the Calendar for Special Orders Committee Report No. 41, introduced by Senator Maceda, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INVESTIGATIONS TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE REPORT THAT THE OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION (OWWA) HAS PURCHASED AN OLD, DILAPIDATED AND CONDEMNED BUILDING FOR SIXTY-EIGHT MILLION PESOS (P68,000,000.00) WHICH NOBODY HAD WANTED TO BUY EVEN FOR