

RECORD OF THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1995

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 10:45 a.m., the session was resumed with the Honorable Orlando S. Mercado, presiding.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The session is resumed.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, May I ask the Secretary to read the Second Additional Reference of Business.

Then, we will resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 532, the bill creating the National Dairy Authority.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The Secretary will read the Second Additional Reference of Business.

SECOND ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Acting Secretary [Atty. Raval]:

January 30, 1995

Mr. President:

I have been directed to inform the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on January 30, 1995, House Bill No. 1419, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FIFTY-BED EXTENSION PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL IN PALAYAN CITY, PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA, TO BE KNOWN AS THE PAULINO J. GARCIA HOSPITAL, PALAYAN CITY EXTENSION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

to which it requests the concurrence of the Senate.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) CAMILO L. SABIO
Secretary General

The Honorable
EDGARDO J. ANGARA
President of the Senate
M a n i l a

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Referred to the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance.

The Acting Secretary [Atty. Raval]:

January 30, 1995

Mr. President:

I have been directed to inform the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on January 30, 1995, House Bill No. 1969, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN LUIS, PROVINCE OF AURORA, TO BE KNOWN AS THE SAN LUIS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,

to which it requests the concurrence of the Senate.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) CAMILO L. SABIO
Secretary General

The Honorable
EDGARDO J. ANGARA
President of the Senate
M a n i l a

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Referred to the Committees on Education, Arts and Culture; and Finance.

The Acting Secretary [Atty. Raval]:

January 30, 1995

Mr. President:

I have been directed to inform the Senate that the House of Representatives passed on January 30, 1995, House Bill No. 5920, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY OF TALAVERA DR. PAULINO J. GARCIA

SHALL BE ACCORDED TAX CREDITS EQUIVALENT TO TEN (10) PERCENT OF THE VALUE OF THE EXCESS VOLUME PURCHASED."

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

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, there are no more individual amendments.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The Majority Leader.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I ask that the Minority Leader be recognized for his individual amendment.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The Chair recognizes Senator Tañada.

Senator Tañada: Thank you, Mr. President.

Before I propose my amendment, I would like to inquire from the distinguished Sponsor why the Secretary of Department of Science and Technology is not a member of the Dairy Industry Authority as proposed in the bill.

I believe that the Department of Science and Technology has been involved in many researches and technology dissemination in the area of milk and dairy products. So if there is really a good reason why the Secretary of Department of Science and Technology should not be a member of the Authority, then I would like to know what the reasons are.

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, the Minority Leader is absolutely right. But if we will recall, in the new version of the bill, we did include, as part of the Committee amendments yesterday, the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology.

Senator Tañada: I see. So he is already in the Authority.

Senator Shahani: He is already in the Authority.

Senator Tañada: In which case, Mr. President, I have no amendment to propose.

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

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Is there any objection? [*Silence*] Hearing none, the period of amendments is closed.

APPROVAL OF S. NO. 532 ON SECOND READING

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move for the approval of Senate Bill No. 532, as amended, on Second Reading.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: 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. 532, as amended, is approved on Second Reading.

BILL ON SECOND READING Senate Bill No. 1998 - Regulating the Practice of Optometry (Continuation)

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 1998, as reported out under Committee Report No. 764.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 1998 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: We are in the period of interpellations. I ask that the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Health and Demography, Senator Webb, be recognized, with the distinguished Gentleman from Quezon City and Leyte, Senator Mercado, to interpellate.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

I ask for a short suspension of the session so that the Presiding Officer can be relieved.

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

It was 11:01 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 11:21 a.m., the session was resumed with Senator Raul S. Roco, presiding.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: The session is resumed.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: Senator Mercado is recognized.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, will the Sponsor of the measure answer a few questions?

Senator Webb: Certainly, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: For our information, Mr. President, will the Sponsor please explain to this Body the difference between an "optometrist" and an "ophthalmologist"?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, as far as optometrists are concerned, it is clearly stated in the bill who are optometrists. If the Gentleman will look at the bill very carefully, the definition of "optometrist" is well-stated in the bill.

Senator Mercado: I think, Mr. President, that in our deliberations, these questions are asked to establish the antecedents for our further questions.

My question, if I may repeat it, is: What is the difference between an "optometrist" and an "ophthalmologist"? I have in my hands the copy of the bill and I know there is a definition of an optometrist but I am asking the difference between the two professions.

Senator Webb: An "ophthalmologist" is a doctor of medicine specializing in eye diseases, and at the same time, does surgical work; while, an "optometrist" is a doctor of optometry primarily concerned with the vision and care of the eye, clinical refraction, dispensing visual aids like eyeglasses, contact lenses, et cetera, and other related services. An optometrist does not operate unlike an ophthalmologist.

Senator Mercado: Do all ophthalmologists perform operations?

Senator Webb: That is included in their training, Mr. President. They are trained to operate but it does not mean that all of them have performed operations.

Senator Mercado: To become an optometrist, what course is taken, and how long is this course?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, right now, optometry is a four-year course. But if the distinguished Gentleman will remember correctly, in the optometry bill that was vetoed by President Ramos, it was supposed to be a six-year course. In this particular bill, we have left it to the discretion of the Commission on Higher Education.

Senator Mercado: So does this bill incorporate a provision seeking to lengthen the course of optometry?

Senator Webb: It does not, Mr. President. It says that we are leaving this particular discretion to the Commission on Higher Education to study for themselves if it will be to the advantage not only of the optometrists but of the public itself.

Senator Mercado: So in preparation for the practice of optometry, the student takes a four-year course. Is there a board exam that he or she has to take?

Senator Webb: Yes, there is a board examination, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Is the optometrist conferred any title, in the same manner as a medical doctor?

Senator Webb: That is right, Mr. President. He is given a title, Doctor of Optometry.

Senator Mercado: So, that is an official title, Doctor of Optometry?

Senator Webb: Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Could the distinguished Sponsor tell this Representation, Mr. President, how an optometrist works? What does he do? My understanding is that errors of refractions are determined. What are these terms? Could the distinguished Sponsor give us an idea of what the optometrist does in his clinic?

Senator Webb: Well, Mr. President, according to the definition itself, optometry is the science and art of examining the human eye. It also analyzes the ocular function, prescribing and dispensing ophthalmic lenses, prisms, contact lenses and their accessories and solutions, low-vision aids, and similar appliances and devices. They also conduct ocular exercises, vision training, orthoptics, installing prosthetics, down the line, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: The Gentleman spoke, Mr. President, of examination of the eye. What would be the difference between the examination of the eye conducted by an ophthalmologist as against what is being done by an optometrist?

Senator Webb: Basically, as far as the examinations are concerned, Mr. President, they are the same.

Senator Mercado: So, the optometrist conducts the same

examination of the eye like that of the ophthalmologist?

Senator Webb: Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Would that mean that the optometrist looks for diseases of the eye?

Senator Webb: They do, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: The optometrist determines whether a patient has cataract?

Senator Webb: No, Mr. President. What happens is, the optometrist refers a particular patient to an ophthalmologist.

Senator Mercado: So, there is a difference between the examination of the eye conducted by the ophthalmologist and the optometrist?

Senator Webb: None, Mr. President. They are identical except for the fact that the job description of an optometrist has limitations. After he has examined the patient and he will not be able to give the necessary correction on the eye — as I have mentioned earlier defining what optometry is — then the patient is given a therapy and probably, later on, he is referred to the ophthalmologist.

Senator Mercado: If, for example, a patient has difficulty in seeing, has vision impairment, his eyeball is painful and he is noticing a hardness in the eyeball, both optometrist and ophthalmologist can examine the eye in the same manner. Would it be right for him to go to an optometrist or should he go to an ophthalmologist?

Senator Webb: Well, I would say he will have to go to an ophthalmologist. But an optometrist, by his experience alone will be able to detect exactly what might be needed. But again, his responsibility ends up there, and the patient, as I have mentioned, is referred to an ophthalmologist who will look closely and give an exact description of what the disease or the difference in his eye is.

Senator Mercado: The Sponsor said that the optometrist can detect what is wrong. Does it mean that the optometrist can establish whether a person has a problem in the eye like cataract, retinal detachment or glaucoma, and as a consequence, will refer the same to an ophthalmologist? Or would that be a diagnostic function performed only by an ophthalmologist?

Senator Webb: An optometrist may be able to detect the particular necessity, and the sickness probably. Again, his limitations are primarily in correcting the refractive error.

Senator Mercado: When the Sponsor says that the optometrist can detect the disease, the optometrist is not, in any way, making a diagnosis?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, may I make a correction. It is not "can" but "may". He may be able to detect because of his experience.

For instance, barangay health workers may even know the exact sickness. But they cannot operate on a kidney, for instance, although they might know that indeed the patient has a defective kidney.

Senator Mercado: May or shall, but should he? Is the education of the optometrist, which is a four-year course, enough to give him the competence to determine whether a patient has retinal detachment, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, cataract or any other similar eye disease? Is it not that the examination of the eye for organic defects or diseases a function solely given to an ophthalmologist, and the optometrist's function is just to measure the error of refraction?

Senator Webb: I agree with the Gentleman for the reason that he has stated.

Senator Mercado: Then there is a difference in the examination of the eye conducted by an optometrist as compared to the examination of the eye conducted by an ophthalmologist.

Senator Webb: In that particular situation, the Gentleman is right. But on the basis of general examination, this will have to be handled by an ophthalmologist.

Senator Mercado: So, it is safe to say that the job that is done by the optometrist can be done by the ophthalmologist. But the job that is done by an ophthalmologist cannot and should not be performed by the optometrist. Is that a fair statement, Mr. President?

Senator Webb: That is a fair statement, but may I add that it is not in all cases.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, I need some clarification for that statement. My understanding is that the medical profession is regulated. It is actually one of the most regulated professions because it is dealing with lives and diseases. As such, even cardiologists do not practice ophthalmology; urologists do not perform plastic surgery. There are specializations that these people go through over and beyond the education that they obtained in medical schools. It would be a dangerous proposition to say that optometrists may even attempt to diagnose diseases. Would that not be a fair statement?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, as the Gentleman has given an example, I say that it will not apply to all cases. The reason why I said this is, it does not mean that everything an ophthalmologist can do cannot be done by an optometrist.

If we talk of the errors of refraction, I can say that that can be done by an optometrist. We know very well that as far as ophthalmologists are concerned, they have a very extensive training, primarily because they specialize on the different aspects of eye diseases. Added to that, the course that they take is 12 years compared to an optometrist who finishes his course in four years.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, if the function of an optometrist is basically to determine what has been mentioned as the error of refraction and as a consequence prepare the eyeglasses that fit and correct the so-called "error", can these functions be done already by new machine?

What I am trying to say is that, do we have the technology that can determine one's so-called "grade"? What do we mean by the grade of the eyes? Could the Sponsor explain to us exactly what is measured?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, the technology is there, but we cannot take away even in every technology a human judgment. These are human judgments made by the two professions involved.

Senator Mercado: I would like to understand more matters concerning what we call the grade of one's vision. We have a phrase that says, "Your vision is 20/20." Does this phrase have its origin in optometry? What is that 20/20? Is that the grade?

Senator Webb: The grade is 20/20. Is the Gentleman asking whether that is the grade?

Senator Mercado: I am trying to find out if the phrase "20/20 vision" has anything to do with the so-called "grade" of one's vision. Maybe the Sponsor can educate this Representation and tell us what is meant by the grade.

Senator Webb: Mr. President, "20/20" means that if a person with a normal eyesight can see at 20 feet, somebody with a grade of 20/20 will be able to see also the same clear vision in 20 feet.

The Gentleman will have to forgive this Representation when most of the time, honestly, I am asking my staff. The questions are really new to me. I ask for his indulgence, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: It is all right, Mr. President. Actually, the direction of my question is, first, to establish what is being done by an optometrist as differentiated from an ophthalmologist. Second, what is being done by an optometrist in order to really understand what an optometrist does, so that we can move towards understanding the policy proposals that are being made, because this measure is quite comprehensive. This will regulate the practice of optometry and create the Board of Optometric Education. It would spell the future of optometry.

I think it is incumbent upon us — I am not asking these questions to be facetious, there is a basis for these questions because our other questions on the policy would be based on our understanding of what an optometrist does. My question on technology is also simple. It has a reason.

I remember there was a time when one goes to an optometrist's shop and has an examination — one is supposed to read some letters — there is a chart that one reads. A Snellen's Chart, if I am not mistaken.

Senator Webb: I just asked, Mr. President, and the Gentleman is right.

Senator Mercado: Can one's grade of the eyes be determined without using that kind of a chart?

Senator Webb: With the present technology, it could be done. If I may add, Mr. President. I do not know if I am guessing — some of the things that the Gentleman is asking is primarily, of course, his concern, and I share this concern. Let me just put it on record, that particularly on that bill which was vetoed by President Ramos, it was because there was a conflict between an ophthalmologist and an optometrist, and I agree with the Gentleman in that regard.

What we did in this particular bill, if we are to take a matrix on this, is to primarily strike a balance or agreement between the two sides, and I am happy to report that somehow an agreement has been signed, sealed and delivered. I guess some corporations are really the ones against this particular bill. Later on, Mr. President, hopefully, we would be able to explain our reasons for excluding corporations and use of trade names in the practice of optometry.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, I am not in that particular area. Actually, what I was asking about was an explanation of what the optometrist does, to be able to understand this policy proposal.

When I asked questions regarding a comparison between an

ophthalmologist and an optometrist, I think these are germane questions because these strike at the very roots of the definition of functions.

Actually, the question I am pursuing now, Mr. President, simply put is: Can one obtain a pair of eyeglasses without going through an examination using a Snellen's Chart? Sometimes, I have seen these reading glasses. Sometimes one will find these on racks in stores. My understanding is that when one reaches the age of 40 or thereabouts, invariably, one will have to use reading glasses because of some changes on the eyeball. Now, one can pick out those reading glasses and try them out and find one that suits his vision. Not going through an examination of an optometrist.

Is that safe, is that allowed? Is that a practice that is not compromising our health in terms of vision?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, when the Gentleman mentioned the age of forty and as such, one will probably have to use glasses, maybe it is a revelation that the Honorable Gentleman is above 40.

Senator Mercado: Yes, I do not deny my age. Actually the new term that is being used—the new politically accepted term, for those who are aging is: “chronologically gifted persons.” That is the new term. I think it will do well for us to show some respect for those who are advancing in age by calling them chronologically gifted.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: If the Gentleman will allow, does it mean that if one is younger, he is chronologically backward?

Senator Mercado: No. The word “young” has in itself already enough positive meaning.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: Shall we then allow these two chronologically gifted individuals to continue?

Senator Webb: That is why I took off my glasses when the Honorable Senator questioned about people over 40 years of age using glasses.

Anyway, Mr. President, on the question of Senator Mercado. Yes, high tech equipment is capable of doing this. But again, we have to realize, as I mentioned, there are human judgments that are made and as such, we know very well that machines do not go to school and machines cannot be held accountable.

Senator Mercado: I was just trying to establish the fact that technology has advanced in such a manner that eye examina-

tions can now be made without asking the patient to read the Shellen Chart. My information is that one can just look at a picture and with some computer mechanism, the optometrist can determine already one's error of refraction. Is that information correct or valid?

Senator Webb: That is right, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: So, after the examination, what does the optometrist do in the preparation of the eyeglasses, exactly what is being done afterwards?

Senator Webb: After that examination, Mr. President, the optometrist analyzes, and if there is a need for eyeglasses, then he prescribes the wearing of eyeglasses. The eyeglasses are done not by the optometrist but by opticians.

Senator Mercado: Is the preparation of the eyeglass done by the optometrist himself or can an assistant do it for him? Does it have to be a licensed optometrist to be able to grind this so-called “glass”, if that is the process being used?

Senator Webb: Iyon pong pagga-grind o iyong pagsukat, for instance, sa frame, ang talagang gumagawa ay iyong opticians. Ang pagsukat niyan, iyong eksakto sa frame, ang optician po ang gumagawa nito.

Senator Mercado: So, the optometrist himself is the one who is supposed to do this particular function?

Senator Webb: I did not hear it, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Will we get into a stage where we can pick eyeglasses off the shelf, or by just looking into a machine determine one's error of refraction? Would the Sponsor say that the function or the job of the optometrist is indeed changing and little by little taken over by technology?

Senator Webb: The technology, Mr. President, is just a guide but the final judgment really falls on the shoulders of the doctors. If they are, for instance, ophthalmologists, then it falls on their shoulders. If they are optometrists, then it would necessarily be their responsibility.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, the reason why I am asking this question is that, I am reminded of the profession called “pharmacy.”

In the past, pharmacy as a course was popular, there were a lot of students enrolling. Today, this enrollment is gone.

When we were sponsoring the Generics Act many years

ago, in our studies we found out that many of the so-called "drugstores" do not have the old-style pharmacist who himself or herself was compounding or mixing the medicines, because now medicines are already bought compounded and packed or ready for distribution.

In other words, the functions of the pharmacist in the local *botica* was already taken over by technology and we have a situation where the distribution of medicines has become so massive that there is no necessity for pharmacists to be present in the *botica* because a saleslady can read the prescriptions, and as they do not mix the medicines anymore they can dispense the same quickly. That situation reveals that the profession itself has changed.

The reason I am asking this question, Mr. President, is to find out whether or not there is a parallelism between the functions of a profession called "pharmacy" and the profession called "optometry"? Or are there changes in the distribution of eyeglasses and in the manner of distribution of medicines? That is the objective of my questions, Mr. President.

Senator Webb: We cannot compare a pharmacist — as Senator Mercado mentioned — to an optometrist. Because optometrists are like medical doctors who deal in the examination of the eye, diagnosis, and also the optical treatment of visual problems. There is a personal doctor-patient relationship here, while a pharmacist simply fills up prescriptions of a medical doctor. The pharmacist is a conduit. But there is a direct relationship between the patient and the optometrist.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, I am a little apprehensive about the definition of an optometrist as "like medical doctors". We have to define in this measure — as it is defined — and make explicit this definition because the records of our debates here form part of the *Congressional Record*. If we say here that the optometrist can perform what we call quasi-medical functions, then we are establishing a policy.

So, if I may go back, the question is this: Are they the same or similar or like — as the word used by Senator Webb — the ophthalmologist? We have to define this, Mr. President. Or is the function totally different?

When I mentioned the pharmacist, Mr. President, I was not comparing the two — the pharmacist and the optometrist — but I was speaking of how they evolve; on how technology has taken over the functions of pharmacy. Actually, the information I would like to elicit is this: These technological changes happening now, are these affecting or changing the role that is being performed by the optometrist?

Senator Webb: Mr. President, if I may underline what I just mentioned — I said they are like doctors. The reason I said this is, just like doctors, optometrists do have peculiar relationships with their patients and as such, I primarily underlined and underscored this particular situation.

Again, going back to the example, unlike a pharmacist — as I mentioned it — that is a conduit, primarily because what happens to a pharmacist is, he gets a prescription from a doctor and gives the medicine to a patient, while an optometrist has a special trust and confidence reposed upon him by his patient.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, those who have eye defects or those who use contact lenses utilize some drops for their eyes.

Under this particular measure, Mr. President, and under the functions of the optometrist as defined, does he have the authority to prepare such solutions and prescribe the same solutions in the use of one's contact lenses or whatever?

Is that a function solely practiced by the ophthalmologist or can the optometrist do the same?

Senator Webb: As far as contact lenses are concerned, these droppers are over-the-counter medicines that can be bought and can be given by an optometrist. There are certain DPAs mentioned in the bill that an optometrist may use drugs. These are diagnostic medicines, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado: Can the optometrist prepare certain solutions for the use of a patient who is, for example, using contact lenses?

Senator Webb: Yes, Mr. President. This is, right now, being regulated by the BFAD.

Senator Mercado: If, for example, the patient develops a disease or becomes blind as a consequence of the use of the same solution prescribed by the optometrist, can the patient sue the optometrist for malpractice in the same manner as doctors are charged with malpractice under such instances?

Senator Webb: Yes, Mr. President, they can be charged.

Senator Mercado: As we have been saying, Mr. President, there are changes that are happening now as regards eye wear or eyeglasses. There was a time when contact lenses were not in existence. Now, there are different types of contact lenses. There are extended wear contact lenses, contact lenses that one can use continuously. There are those that are hard and there are

those that are soft. Will the Sponsor explain this to us?

Senator Webb: There are even colored contact lenses now.

Senator Mercado: Yes, Mr. President. I believe that some ladies are wont to use colored contact lenses if only to change the color of their eyes.

If, for example, one wants to utilize these things for cosmetic purposes, what would be the liability of an optometrist if the patient develops certain reactions that can lead to damage of the eye or even blindness?

Senator Webb: They would be liable, Mr. President, particularly, as the Gentleman mentioned, for cosmetic purposes, if that is the wish of the patient. But the optometrist would still be held liable. Just for the record, contact lenses has been with us as early as 1957.

Senator Mercado: And those types that I mentioned—the soft, hard, extended wear—are they already popularly distributed?

Senator Webb: Those are new ones, Mr. President. But contact lens *per se*, they have been with us since 1957.

The ones that the Gentleman mentioned are new technologies and recent inventions.

Senator Mercado: Mr. President, in view of the lateness of the hour, I will wind up my questions by going back to an issue that I just want to be stated on the *Record*.

Can ophthalmologists, under this bill, practice optometry? I mean, will they be prohibited or can they distribute, take errors of refraction, and sell eyeglasses in their clinics?

Senator Webb: Yes, Mr. President. There was an extensive consultation with ophthalmologists. Certainly, they can.

Senator Mercado: Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Webb: Thank you.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: What is the pleasure of the Majority Leader?

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: The session is

suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 12:01 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 12:03 p.m., the session was resumed.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: The session is resumed.

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, the following have expressed their reservation to interpellate on the Optometry Bill: Senators Roco, Gonzales and Osmeña.

Senator Shahani: Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: Senator Shahani is recognized.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR SHAHANI (Senator Romulo as Coauthor of S. No. 532)

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, I would just want to make a brief manifestation.

I am pleased to inform the Chamber that our distinguished Majority Leader, Senator Romulo, has become a coauthor of Senate Bill No. 532, the National Dairy Industry which has just been approved on Second Reading.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Roco]: It is so noted.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF S. NO. 1998

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 1998.

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

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, in this afternoon's session, we shall take up the following bills: Senate Bill No. 2008, the Computerization of Election Counting bill; House Bill No. 10844, the bill Granting Permanent Status to Aliens; Senate Bill No. 1061, the Legal Framework and Mechanism for Economic Zones; Senate Bill No. 1998, the Optometry Bill, as well as the other bills which are in the Calendar, such as the AFP Modernization bill.

Mr. President, may I also state that the printed copies of the bill on Condominium Act has just been distributed on the desk of our Colleagues.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE SESSION

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we adjourn

this morning's session until four o'clock this afternoon.

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

It was 12:06 p.m.