

RECORD OF THE SENATE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1994

ROLL CALL

OPENING OF THE SESSION

At 4:39 p.m., the Honorable Orlando S. Mercado, Presiding Officer, called the session to order.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: The 36th session of the Senate is hereby called to order.

We shall be led in prayer by Senator Coseteng.

Everybody rose for the opening prayer.

PRAYER

Senator Coseteng:

Diyos po nating maawain. Tulungan po Ninyo ang Inyong mga anak na magpasiya upang mabigyan ng ganap na katarungan ang ating mga kababayan lalung-lalo na at pinag-uusapan ngayon ang usapin tungkol sa badyet para sa susunod na taon at ang General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade na siya pong maaaring makasalakay ng aming mga magsasaka, mangingisda at maliliit na mga kababayan.

Bigyan po Ninyo kami ng karagdagang liwanag upang kami ay maaaring magpasya para sa kabutihan ng taong-bayan sa lahat ng aming tinatalakay dito sa Mataas na Kapulungan.

Amen.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

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

It was 4:40 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 4:41 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Secretary will please call the roll.

The Secretary:

Senator Heherson T. Alvarez	Present*
Senator Agapito A. Aquino	Present*
Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon	Present
Senator Anna Dominique M. L. Coseteng	Present
Senator Neptali A. Gonzales	Present
Senator Ernesto F. Herrera	Present
Senator Jose D. Lina Jr.	Present*
Senator Gloria Macapagal	Present*
Senator Ernesto M. Maceda	Present
Senator Orlando S. Mercado	Present
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 M. Tolentino	Present
Senator Freddie N. Webb	Present
The President	**

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: With 17 Senators having answered the roll, the Chair declares the existence of a quorum.

THE JOURNAL

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, since we adjourned at about 12:30 this noon, to give our Secretariat a little more time to finish the *Journal*, I move that we defer consideration of the *Journal* until later in the session today.

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

The Secretary will now proceed with the reading of the Order of Business.

* Arrived after the roll call

** On official mission

Sponsor: Senator Tolentino

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: To the Calendar for Ordinary Business.

The Acting Secretary: Committee Report No. 616 prepared and submitted by the Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation on Senate Bill No. 1943 with Senator Romulo, *et al.* as authors thereof, entitled

**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A SYSTEM OF
ABSENTEE VOTING BY FILIPINOS ABROAD,**

recommending its approval in consolidation with S. Nos. 101, 454, 653, 1227, 1389, 1427, 1429, 1450, 1472, 1679, 1789, and 1928.

Sponsor: Senator Tolentino

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: To the Calendar for Ordinary Business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

Senator Romulo: Mr. President.

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

Senator Romulo: I move that we transfer from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders the following electoral reform bills: Senate Bill No. 1941 as reported out under Committee Report No. 614; Senate Bill No. 1942, as reported out under Committee Report No. 615; and Senate Bill No. 1943, as reported out under Committee Report No. 616.

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

**BILL ON SECOND READING
Senate Bill No. 1913 - Party-List System
(Continuation)**

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 1913, as reported out under Committee Report No. 583. Clean copies of the bill, with the Committee amendments, have been distributed to our respective Colleagues since this morning, and we announced that we shall take up this bill this afternoon for the individual amendments.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Resumption of

consideration of Senate Bill No. 1913 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: I ask that the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Electoral Reforms, Senator Arturo Tolentino, be recognized.

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

Senator Romulo: Mr. President, for the individual amendments, may we do the amendments page by page, starting with the first page so that we can have an orderly manner of considering the individual amendments.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Is there any objection? [*Silence*] We shall proceed page by page. We will start with page 1. Are there any amendments on page 1?

Senator Shahani: Mr. President.

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

SHAHANI AMENDMENT

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, on page 1, line 9, I would like to propose that the words "highly" and "and eminent" be deleted, and in lieu thereof, I would like the line to read as follows: "Towards this end, qualified persons, OF PROVEN INTEGRITY AND WITH A RECORD OF SERVICE IN THE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE SECTORS..."

I feel that this would be useful, Mr. President, because after all, the party-list system should represent sectors which are marginalized, poor and oppressed. If we keep these words, "highly" and "and eminent", we might give the impression that they have to be very highly qualified in the academic or in the financial sense.

To keep that pro-poor element in the qualifications of the candidates, that is the proposal I submit.

May I repeat: "Towards this end, qualified persons, OF PROVEN INTEGRITY AND WITH A RECORD OF SERVICE IN THE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE SECTORS,".

Senator Tatad: Mr. President.

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

Senator Tatad: Before the distinguished Sponsor acts on

the motion, may I ask a question of the distinguished Sponsor of the amendment.

I would support the proposed deletion. But with respect to the proposed insertion of the words enumerated by our distinguished President Pro Tempore, I would like to ask whether the inclusion of these words would not, in fact, impose on the parties certain specific qualifications on those who will be submitted to the Comelec, and on the basis of which the Comelec might rule that a certain list submitted by a certain party does not meet the standards specified under this provision?

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, I think this is really to guide the parties because these are sectoral representatives. They cannot be the ordinary politicians seeking power. We are now making sure that those who are not in the mainstream of political representation do have some access to a seat in the legislature.

Since there is an indication here of the qualifications, they must be faithful to the philosophy of the party-list system which would really be representatives from the sectors.

Senator Tatad: For instance, the age qualification for youth would be 25 to 28. What record of service might we expect from people under that category?

Anyway, I will leave this now to the wisdom of the distinguished Sponsor.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Will the Sponsor reply to that.

Senator Tolentino: Mr. President, we appreciate the intent of the distinguished President Pro Tempore in proposing this amendment. Our only feeling is, this might exclude actual representation by the sectors. There are some sectors which may not be able to comply with this requirement. For persons who have integrity, it is all right. But with regard to this record of service in the public or private sector, many in the sectors may be excluded from choice of their different sectors.

The remarks of the distinguished Gentleman from Catanduanes are very pertinent. It might unduly limit the choice of the parties and/or the sectors which will submit their list of representatives, in case they are entitled to representatives under the party-list system. We submit that consideration to the distinguished Proponent of the amendment.

Senator Shahani: Mr. President, what do we mean when

we say "eminent persons"? Suppose we want to have the disabled represented, how would we choose an eminent or highly qualified person among the disabled or, let us say, among the urban poor? That is what I am trying to say. When we use these words, we are really using them in terms of academic or professional qualifications. And precisely, this is what I think — these sectoral representatives are not. They have worked with their sectoral concerns — the urban poor, the peasants, the women, the youth.

Let me restate my amendment and say, "and with a track record of service." We can take off the words "public and/or private", if that would make it easier, Mr. President.

Senator Tolentino: Mr. President, as far as the deletion of the words "highly" and "and eminent" is concerned, maybe that would broaden the scope of those who can be recommended or who would be nominees of the parties participating in the party-list election. But the addition of the phrase "with a record of service in the public and/or private sector" might be a bigger limitation than what we have eliminated, with the words "highly" and "and eminent" being taken out of the bill.

Can we not just limit the amendment to the deletion of the words "highly" and "and eminent" to broaden the scope of selection by the different parties participating in the party-list system?

Senator Shahani: If the distinguished Sponsor would agree to the deletion of the words "highly" and "and eminent", I think my concerns will be covered, Mr. President.

Senator Tolentino: Is the distinguished Proponent of the amendment modifying the proposed amendment?

Senator Shahani: Yes, Mr. President. It would read this way: "TOWARDS THIS END, QUALIFIED PERSONS SHALL BE SELECTED TO BECOME MEMBERS."

Senator Tolentino: The amendment is accepted, Mr. President.

Senator Shahani: Thank you, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Are there any other amendments on page 1?

Senator Tatad: Mr. President.

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

Senator Tatad: Mr. President, before I propose an amendment, I would like to ask a clarificatory question.

On lines 19 and 20, under *Definition of Terms*, we have letter (b) which reads, "A party or organization may mean either a political party or a sectoral organization."

My question is: Are the words "party" and "organization" interchangeable? Does the word "party" mean either a political party or a sectoral organization? Likewise, does the word "organization" mean either a political party or a sectoral organization?

Senator Tolentino: Yes, Mr. President.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Before the distinguished Sponsor replies, what lines are we in, Senator Tatad?

Senator Tatad: We are on page 1, lines 19 and 20.

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: Before that, let us act on the amendment of Senator Shahani.

Is there any objection? [*Silence*] Hearing none, the amendment is approved. Please proceed.

Senator Tolentino: In answer to the query of the distinguished Gentleman from Catanduanes, I think the words "party" and "organization" as used here are understood interchangeably because there is no repetition of the word "political". Sometimes, we just use the word "organization" and that would include the political parties.

Senator Tatad: So, a "party" in this case may be understood to mean a sectoral organization.

Senator Tolentino: Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Tatad: And "organization" may be understood to mean a "political party"?

Senator Tolentino: Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Tatad: I have no amendment to propose, mr. President.

Senator Webb: Mr. President.

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

WEBB AMENDMENTS

Senator Webb: Thank you, Mr. President.

This is an anterior amendment on line 12. It is possible to delete the word "or" and after the word "organization", replace the period (.) with a (,) and add the words "OR COALITIONS THEREOF"?

Senator Tolentino: What page is that, Mr. President?

Senator Webb: the same page, line 12. Delete the word "or" between the words "parties" and "organizations", and after the word "organizations", change the period (.) to a comma (,) and add the words "OR COALITION THEREOF".

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: What does the Sponsor say?

Senator Tolentino: If the intention is to add the word "coalitions", it will not be necessary to remove the word "or". The phrase "sectoral parties or organization OR COALITION THEREOF" would be acceptable to the Sponsor, Mr. President.

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

Senator Webb: On the same page, line 16, delete the word "of" between the words "Representatives" and "national", and substitute it with the word "THROUGH".

Senator Tolentino: What is the proposal, Mr. President?

Senator Webb: May I repeat. On line 16, between the words "Representatives" and "national", delete the word "of" and in lieu thereof, insert the word "THROUGH".

So, the whole sentence from line 15 will read: "Party-list system is a mechanism of proportional representation in the House of Representatives THROUGH national, regional and sectoral parties or organizations registered with the Commission on Elections."

Senator Tolentino: It is accepted, Mr. President.

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

Senator Webb: Again, Mr. President, to be consistent also. On line 17, after the word "organizations," insert again the words "OR COALITIONS THEREOF".

Senator Tolentino: It is accepted, Mr. President.

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

Senator Webb: On the same page, line 20, delete the period (.) after the word "organization", and add the phrase "OR A COALITION OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND/OR SECTORAL ORGANIZATIONS."

The Presiding Officer [Senator Mercado]: What does the Sponsor say?

Senator Tolentino: How are we going to read it, Mr. President?

Senator Webb: It is on line 20, Mr. President, on the same page. After the word "organization", add the following: "OR A COALITION OF POLITICAL PARTY OR PARTIES AND/OR SECTORAL ORGANIZATION OR ORGANIZATIONS."

Senator Tolentino: We accept the amendment, Mr. President.

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

We shall now proceed to page 2.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

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

It was 5:08 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:08 p.m., the session was resumed with the Honorable Senate President Pro Tempore, Sen. Leticia Ramos Shahani, presiding.

The President Pro Tempore: The session is resumed.

Senator Tatad: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Tatad is recognized.

Senator Tatad: May I respectfully ask for a reconsideration of the last approval. We are defining here a party or organization....

The President Pro Tempore: Excuse me. May the Chair know what line is the Gentleman referring to?

Senator Tatad: Lines 19 to 20. "A party or organization may either mean a political party or a sectoral organization." Once we add the coalition of several parties or organizations, then we would no longer be defining the single unit of a party or organization. So, I ask for a reconsideration of that approval.

Senator Tolentino: The amendment which we just approved, proposed by Senator Webb, is just to see to it that when the word "party" alone, or "organization" is used in the law, it may also include a coalition. I think that was the intent and the scope of the amendment. We accepted that because that may be true.

In this bill, in case of registration for the party-list system, a vote for a coalition may be accepted and a vote for the coalition is a vote only for that group or organization. So, we feel that that is acceptable in the light of other provisions of the bill.

Senator Tatad: I yield to that interpretation, Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Thank you.

Senator Webb: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Webb is recognized.

WEBB AMENDMENT

Senator Webb: Mr. President, on page 2, line 2, insert before the word "qualified" the following words: "CITIZENS MAINLY" and add a comma (,) after the word "voters". So the whole text on page 2 would read as letter (c) "A political party refers to an organized group of CITIZENS MAINLY qualified voters, advocating the same ideology", *et cetera*.

Senator Tolentino: The amendment is accepted, Madam President, because we have seen political parties with actually young people who are not yet qualified voters.

The President Pro Tempore: Is there any objection to this amendment? [Silence] Hearing none, the amendment is approved.

Senator Herrera: Mr. President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Herrera is recognized.

Senator Herrera: Before I propose an amendment, Madam President, may I just be clarified.

Is the intention of the bill to allow political parties which field candidates in the regular process of election to register also as party-list under the party-list system? Because if we will allow them to participate in the party-list system, then that defeats the purpose of giving the marginalized sector the chance to be represented in Congress.

Senator Tolentino: The intention of the bill, Madam President, as it is now worded, is to disqualify from the party-list system those parties that are already presenting candidates in the different congressional districts.

Senator Herrera: Can we make it very clear in the bill, Madam President, especially in Section 4? Maybe, we can provide a sentence: "PROVIDED FURTHER THAT POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH FIELD CANDIDATES IN THE REGULAR PROCESS OF ELECTION SHALL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PARTY-LIST SYSTEM". Subject to style.

Senator Tolentino: That is covered already, Madam President, by the provisions of Section 5, in paragraph 8.

Senator Herrera: Thank you, Madam President.

Senator Maceda: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Maceda is recognized.

Senator Maceda: Madam President, maybe, we can defer the debate on this until page 3 in connection with Section 5, paragraph 8. Precisely, it was the intention of this Representation—together with some other Senators—to propose to delete this particular subsection which is a position directly opposite the position taken by the distinguished Gentleman from Cebu. But we will debate the matter at that particular time.

The President Pro Tempore: Thank you.

Senator Tolentino: Madam President, this paragraph 8 under Section 5, page 3, is intended to carry out the objective of this bill of giving representation in the House of Representatives to marginal parties or organizations which cannot elect their own

candidates in the district. Therefore, if we allow the big organized political parties to still participate in the party-list system, there is a great possibility of adding to their district representation more representatives in the party-list system and crowd out the small parties or organizations for which the party-list system is originally intended.

I understand the feelings and the views of some of our Colleagues. But I am stating this just to underline the reason for this paragraph 8, and that is, we are intending this party-list system more for marginalized parties which cannot elect candidates in the district.

Senator Gonzales: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Gonzales is recognized.

Senator Gonzales: Madam President, are we already on page 3? My understanding is that, we are still on page 2.

The President Pro Tempore: Yes, that is correct. The Sponsor was just explaining.

Senator Gonzales: There has been a request of Senator Maceda, which I am joining, that we postpone a debate on this particular provision until we reach the appropriate page. In fact, I even have anterior amendments thereto on the same page.

The President Pro Tempore: Yes, we are still on page 2.

Senator Webb: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Webb is recognized.

WEBB AMENDMENT

Senator Webb: Still on page 2, line 12. Again to be consistent with my proposal, I would like to propose that before the word "qualified", add the words "CITIZENS MAINLY", and add the comma (,) after the words "voters". The reason for which is, the sectoral organization is actually composed of nonvoters.

The President Pro Tempore: May we know what is the pleasure of the Sponsor?

Senator Tolentino: We accept the amendment, Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: The amendment is accepted.

Is there any objection to this amendment? [*Silence*] Hearing none, the amendment is approved.

Senator Webb: Still on page 2, Madam President. After line 15, add subsection (d), and this will be the definition of the word "coalition" if it will be accepted by the Sponsor.

"(d) A COALITION REFERS TO AN AGGRUPATION OF DULY REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES ORGANIZED FOR POLITICAL AND/OR ELECTION PURPOSES."

Senator Tolentino: Actually, that is the popular concept of a coalition. But I was just thinking — I am not objecting — whether there should be something in common to the groups that are organized as a coalition.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

The President Pro Tempore: The session is suspended for one minute, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:19 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:21 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President Pro Tempore: The session is resumed.

Senator Webb: Madam President, I have an amendment I was hoping the Sponsor would agree with, which is on what a "coalition" is, the definition which I stated earlier.

If I may reiterate, "A COALITION REFERS TO AN AGGRUPATION OF DULY REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES, ORGANIZED FOR POLITICAL AND/OR ELECTION PURPOSES."

Senator Tolentino: Would the word "AGGRUPATION" there be sufficient?

Senator Webb: I beg your pardon, Madam President.

Senator Tolentino: My question is, the definition refers to an aggrupation. I said, would an aggrupation without some kind of an agreement between the groups or parties be sufficient, or we need to put in some kind of a requirement of an agreement between parties to form a coalition?

The President Pro Tempore: Maybe we can say "bound by a common purpose." Something like that.

Senator Webb: Madam President, is there any amendment to my amendment?

The President Pro Tempore: Well, I believe the Sponsor wants to add something, but...

Senator Tolentino: Yes. To give the element of an agreement of that aggrupation that is just something binding to the groups that are forming the coalition.

Senator Webb: I think it is common knowledge, Madam President, that when a coalition is formed, definitely it has some directions and as such, the idea is to, maybe, give life to the party. The only way to do it is, we coalesce primarily to give better muscle and life to the party itself.

Senator Tolentino: Will the Gentleman be kind enough to read again the amendment as proposed?

Senator Webb: "A COALITION REFERS TO AN AGGRUPATION OF DULY REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES, ORGANIZED FOR POLITICAL AND/OR ELECTION PURPOSES."

Senator Tolentino: Maybe we can accept that, Madam President. It is okay.

The President Pro Tempore: Is there any objection to this amendment?

Senator Osmeña is recognized.

Senator Osmeña: With the permission of the Gentlemen on the Floor.

The definition of "coalition" when it refers to political parties or political organizations, limits the possibility of coalescing between political and sectoral organizations or even civic organizations. Because one coalesces when there is a commonality of cause; when there is a reason or a basic, shall we say, agreement. And one cannot limit or should not limit that event strictly to political organizations, Mr. President.

So, I would propose that, since the Constitution defines those who could participate in the party-list system as being national, regional, sectoral parties or organizations, the definition of "coalition" should be: an agreement of national, regional, sectoral parties or organizations to field a common set of candidates in the party-list election. If we will limit it to political

organizations, then we cannot allow a coalition of sectoral organizations anymore.

Senator Tolentino: Mr. President, I will withdraw, in the meantime, our acceptance of the amendment of the Gentleman from Parañaque and give way to what Senator Osmeña is now saying, if he wants to amend the amendment.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

The President Pro Tempore: Shall we suspend the session for a few minutes so that we can combine all of those suggestions.

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

It was 5:26 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:56 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President Pro Tempore: The session is resumed.

Senator Romulo: Madam President.

The President Pro Tempore: The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Romulo: Madam President, after consulting the Chairman and Sponsor of the bill and our other Colleagues, I sense that we need more time than this afternoon to consider the discussions on the points raised.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1913

Therefore, I have their permission to ask that we, in the meantime, suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 1913, the Party-List Bill.

The President Pro Tempore: Are there any objections? [*Silence*] Hearing none, we therefore suspend further discussions of Senate Bill No. 1913.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

The President Pro Tempore: The session is suspended, if

there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:57 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 6:03 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President Pro Tempore: The session is resumed.

BILL ON SECOND READING

House Bill No. 1248 - Repatriation of Filipino Women (Continuation)

Senator Romulo: Madam President, I move that we resume consideration of House Bill No. 1240, as reported out under Committee Report No. 563.

The President Pro Tempore: Resumption of consideration of House Bill No. 1240 is now in order.

Senator Romulo: We are in the period of interpellations, Madam President. I ask that the distinguished Sponsor of the bill and Chairman of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Sen. Raul Roco, be recognized.

The President Pro Tempore: Senator Roco is recognized.

Senator Roco: Thank you, Madam President.

We terminated our brief Sponsorship Speech yesterday and we will be pleased to answer or try to answer questions from our Colleagues.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

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

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

It was 6:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 6:06 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President Pro Tempore: The session is resumed.

Senator Romulo: Madam President, for the first interpellation, I ask that our distinguished Colleague from