

RECORD OF THE SENATE

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 1991

OPENING OF THE SESSION

At 3:18 p.m., the Honorable Jovito R. Salonga, President of the Senate, called the session to order.

The President. Binubuksan ang pulong ng Senado.

Aawitin ng UP Concert Chorus ang Pambansang Awit at ang "Payapang Daigdig." Pagkatapos, pangungunahan tayo sa panalangin ni Senador Teofisto Guingona.

Everybody rose for the singing of the National Anthem and for the opening prayer.

PRAYER

Senator Guingona.

Dear God in heaven,

We pray for peace in the wake of war. We pray for change arising from war--for a new economic order where poor nations do not have to unjustly bend to the conditions of the rich--where the poor shall progress and the strong shall share--where great issues are settled with hearts and minds and not by guns or weapons of death and destruction.

We pray for change in our own land--that this crisis draw us from distorted dependence on outside forces to self-reliance and self-sustenance of our own destinies.

That we change from revolutions of blood to a revolution of the heart from within.

That we learn to really love others before self, to place the nation's welfare above our own.

Amen.

*Arrived after the roll call
**On official mission

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

ROLL CALL

The Secretary.

Senator Heherson T. Alvarez	Present
Senator Edgardo J. Angara	Present
Senator Agapito A. Aquino	Present
Senator Juan Ponce Enrile	Present
Senator Joseph Ejercito Estrada	Present
Senator Neptali A. Gonzales	Present
Senator Teofisto T. Guingona, Jr.	Present
Senator Ernesto F. Herrera	Present
Senator Sotero H. Laurel	Absent
Senator Jose D. Lina, Jr.	Absent
Senator Ernesto M. Maceda	Present
Senator Orlando S. Mercado	Present
Senator John H. Osmeña	Absent
Senator Vicente T. Paterno	Present
Senator Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr.	Present
Senator Santanina T. Rasul	Absent
Senator Alberto G. Romulo	Present
Senator Rene A. V. Saguisag	Present
Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani	Present
Senator Mamintal Abdul J. Tamano	Present
Senator Wigberto E. Tañada	Present
Senator Victor S. Ziga	Present
The President	Present

The President. Labing-siyam na Senador ang dumalo sa ating pagpupulong; mayroon tayong korum.

THE JOURNAL

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, I move that we dispense with the reading of the *Journal* of the previous session and consider the same as approved.

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

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

draft, inquire from the distinguished proponent of the amendment ...

The President. But he will introduce an amendment in writing yet.

Senator Guingona. Ah, in writing.

The President. Yes.

Senator Guingona. We will just make a reservation.

The President. All right.

So I suppose we can suspend consideration of this measure in the meantime.

The Majority Floor Leader is recognized.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION
OF SENATE BILL NO. 1678**

Senator Guingona. I move that we suspend consideration of this measure, Mr. President.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence]
Hearing none, the motion is approved.

**BILL ON SECOND READING
Senate Bill No. 1003 - Overseas Workers
Development Fund
(Continuation)**

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 1003 as reported out under Committee Report No. 1118. We are now in the period of individual amendments. I ask that we recognize Senator Romulo.

The President. Let us suspend the session for a while.

It was 4:36 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 4:40 p., the session was resumed..

The President. The session is resumed.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, may we recall our previous motion concerning Overseas Workers Development Fund.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence]
Hearing none, the same is approved.

**BILL ON SECOND READING
Senate Bill No. 209-Komisyon ng Wikang Pambansa
(Continuation)**

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 209 as reported out under Committee Report No. 329.

The President. Resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 209 is now in order.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, we are still in the period of interpellations.

I ask that we recognize Senator Mercado, and may I ask the Page to distribute the copies of the bill.

The President. Senator Mercado is recognized.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, we are ready to answer questions.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President.

The President. Senator Pimentel is recognized.

Senator Pimentel. Will the distinguished Gentleman yield to some questions?

Senator Mercado. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. Before I do, may I place on the record that this bill is long overdue; that really, we should have had a Commission to unify the various proposals for the evolution of a national language since the birth of a Republic. But for the sake of clarity, what is the composition of the Commission?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, in the meetings that we had, what was proposed would be a Commission with a Chairman and 12 Members. These minds would

represent the major ethnolinguistic groups: the Tagalogs, Cebuanos, Pangasinan, Bicolanos, Hiligaynon, Warays, and the other major languages that are being used in Mindanao will have a representative. We will have a representative from the academe, from the judiciary, and one from the executive, and one from the media; two deputy Commissioners will be nominated by the Chairman from the Commission, and two deputy Ministers will devote full time work to the effort of developing and helping a national language. The other Commissioners will attend meetings and perform the functions as designated by the Commission.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President, according to Section 3 of the bill--I do not know if there has been an amendment, there are actually 17 members of the Commission. Is that correct, Mr. President?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, this was the original proposal. But, as reported out by the Committee, there are committee amendments that reduce the number of commissioners to 13, and will be divided, as I have mentioned.

Senator Pimentel. Yes, thank you for that information. In fact, I notice in the papers that were given to us only this afternoon that, indeed, there is such an amendment to the Section, so that, linguistically, the following regions will be represented: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano. By the way, the spelling of the word "Sebuano," would, probably, have to be revised. I think, by common usage, it is spelled with a C, rather than with an S. I do not know, but this is something, perhaps, that can be looked into.

Senator Mercado. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Pimentel. Ilocano, Pangasinan, Kapampangan, Bicol, Hiligaynon, Waray, at ang nangingibabaw na wika sa Mindanao.

In this regard, we, probably, should modify the word "Mindanao" by saying "Muslim Mindanao." Because if we talk of "*nangingibabaw na wika sa Mindanao*," I think statistics will show that there are more Visayan-speaking people of Mindanao; not necessarily of people who come from the Visayas, but who were simply influenced by the Cebuano language by our sheer proximity to

Cebu. Mr. President, the language used by so many people is actually Visayan, which is mainly Cebuano.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, that would be a welcome amendment during the period of amendments. We believe that it will be clarified in this particular provision of the measure.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President, while we are now discussing the issue of composition of the Commission, I can see the rationality of the representation coming from the *Pamayanang Pang-Akademiko*, who will be entitled to one representative. But, I cannot see the reason for having one from the judiciary. Why should this be so, Mr. President?

Senator Mercado. Originally, it was aimed at having the broadest representation. Considering that that language, hopefully, will be used also even in court proceedings, it has been sought that, maybe, a representative from the judiciary will be able to help.

But if it is felt that this will raise some constitutional questions, then I believe that we would listen to the good advice of the members of the Senate, especially Senator Pimentel.

Senator Pimentel. Yes, Mr. President. Because if we start singling out the judiciary, why not from other bureaus or departments also which may have their own kind of "language." The question will also apply to this *Kagawarang Tagapagpaganap*. Will the distinguished Gentleman kindly explain what this body is?

Senator Mercado. The Executive Department will be represented. The effort here was to make it as broad as possible. So, maybe, that is the rationale why a representative from the Judiciary and a representative from the Executive Branch were included. Of course, they complete the function because of the part that we play here in the drafting of this law. What is sought here is the broadest possible representation from the bureaucracy to be able to help propagate and develop a national language, and use it at its fullest, hopefully, by the year 2000.

Senator Pimentel. Yes, Mr. President. But if that were the rationale for this, if the Judiciary is entitled to

one, the Executive to one, then the Legislature apparently should be entitled to, perhaps, two; I mean, if that is the purpose. In other words, I am only trying to raise some issues here which the Committee or the Sponsor would perhaps kindly consider before making final amendments to this bill.

Mr. President, what is more important here is that the composition of the Commission should be fairly representative of the major linguistic groups of the country, *para mas madali siguro iyong integration ng iba't-ibang mga pangungusap at lengwahe ng ating bansa*, and thus make for easier acceptance also by the people.

Senator Mercado. I fully support that view and we are not pressing our case with regard to the representatives from the Judiciary or the Executive. We are even willing to have the number of commissioners further reduced. Where the original plan was 17, we reduced it to 13; I think we can further reduce it. As the Gentleman mentioned, there may not be the necessity to have the representative from the Judiciary, and the Executive Branches, as long as the major languages and ethnic languages groups are represented and we have representatives from the media and the academe—I guess we have a fairly good group that will be able to work and help develop a national language.

Senator Pimentel. Thank you very much, Mr. President. That will be all for the moment.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President.

The President. Senator Guingona is recognized.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, would the distinguished Sponsor yield to some questions?

Senator Mercado. Gladly, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. The objective of the creation of a National Language Commission does not intend to legislate a national Language.

Senator Mercado. That is correct, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. It only seeks for the Commis-

sion to undertake, coordinate, and propagate researches for the development of Filipino and other languages.

Senator Mercado. That is true, Mr. President. We believe that language development is not a matter of legislation. We can help set up the structure, but in such a dynamic social phenomenon like language, I think this is best left to its own evolution with some elements that will help catalyze such development with some pro-active actions as we are proposing in this measure.

Senator Guingona. In undertaking, coordinating, and propagating, should not the Legislature detail more standards or guidelines so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, where the institute purified the intended language to only one region?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, in fact as stated in Section 7, we are not legislating a language. The Commission is tasked to develop Filipino as a language and formulate and propose programs including the incorporation or adoption of foreign words which have already gained local acceptance.

The reason we did not spell out the guidelines is to leave to the Commission the prerogative of determining the parameters of its research. Some research is going to be done on language, and if we tell them the limits of research, we might be stifling their studies.

Let us set up the structure. It is clear that Filipino is not Tagalog alone. This is clearly stated in this measure and the intent of the Constitutional provision, I believe they can work from there.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, Section 7 says "existing Philippine languages." May we know if there are major Philippine languages, and if so, how many are there?

Senator Mercado. The major languages that have been identified, that will be also represented in this Commission, will be: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Pangasinan, Kapampangan, Bicol, Hiligaynon, and Waray. In terms of percentage of usage, the data that is available to us is the Census of 1980. In it Tagalog ranks first with 29.66%; followed by Cebuano, 24.4%; Ilocano, 10.30%;

Hiligaynon, 9.16%; Bicol, 5.57%; Waray, 3.98%; Kapampangan, 2.77%, and Pangasinan, 1.84%, of households polled in 1980.

Senator Guingona. If we do not have more specific guidelines, would the Commission have full discretion as to whether to concentrate on the major languages or to only three or four of the mentioned major languages? They would be at liberty to use their discretion however which way they would wish, in recommending the Filipino language.

Senator Mercado. But the mechanism that we have here to serve as a check and a balance against such practices would be the representation of all these major languages.

The inclusion of a media representative, the thrust seems to be for us to accept what is already in common usage--Filipino-- that has also incorporated a number of foreign and also local languages into Filipino; that is, the *lingua franca* of today.

Senator Guingona. Even if we do not create this Commission and enact this measure, the Institute of National Language is presently formulating or doing this task at present.

Senator Mercado. Yes, and the representation, I believe, is not as broad as we have now.

Senator Guingona. If we were to leave it as is, would the direction of the formulation of the language continue, considering that the main developer of National Language does not seem to be a formal Commission or Institute of National Language --not even the schools but media? Considering that, should we not, therefore, have the proposed Commission link up more with media in this bill?

Senator Mercado. Media plays a very important role, Mr. President. For a language to be of broadest use, a formal structure has to exist. The University of the Philippines is preparing a dictionary of scientific and technical terms, for concepts adopted, into Filipino. This is because of the realization that we cannot leave to mass media alone, the development of the language. There will

be a *lingua franca*. But, unfortunately, this will not enrich our own literature, as well as its usage in the sciences, mathematics, and other subjects. We are hoping that a national language that will be spoken by a great majority of our people will develop. At the same time, it will be used also in formal communications, not only in schools but even in the bureaucracy.

Senator Guingona. How would we monitor the progress of this Commission? In other words, I am trying to ask the distinguished Sponsor how we can avoid the mistakes of the past. Since 1935, we have authorized the formulation of a National Language, but until now we are still faced basically with the same problem. How would we monitor the progress of this proposed Commission?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, the monitoring of this particular body that we are creating would not be any different from our monitoring of all other creations of the Senate. However, I would like to make a comment with regard to what is perceived as a failure in the work of the *Surian* in the past. This is largely due to the original mandate, which was to purge the language of foreign words, and that was the reason why there was so much purism. This is no longer the mandate of this Commission. In fact, the Commission will recognize new works that have been absorbed in the national language through practice. They have enriched our language.

The legislature, as usual, can do its monitoring through its oversight function through the budgetary process, and through public hearings, if it is so desired, we will not oppose a requirement for reports to be submitted to Congress.

Senator Guingona. On the other hand, this does not mean that we will institutionalize "Taglish" and adopt almost all the present English words that are now evolving in the "Taglish" language.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, foreign or non-Tagalog words find their way into the *lingua franca*. It is a matter of dynamics.

Senator Guingona. Because the Bahasa, I understand, has very little English or foreign words. It is mainly Malaysian, indigenous, and, I think, we should

learn from this lesson rather than revert to "Taglish."

Senator Mercado. That will bring up the question of purism.

Senator Guingona. At any rate, will the distinguished Sponsor not be adverse to having more specific guidelines?

Senator Mercado. No, Mr. President. I just would like to stress as I have stated previously that we are not legislating language. We are just creating a Commission that would spearhead and catalyze the development of a national language, especially on the technical aspects of language development. Maybe what we can do is ask for an annual report to be submitted to Congress.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, we would like to ask whether it is necessary to have the members of the Commission submitted to the Commission on Appointments for confirmation, considering the fact that they have the rank of bureau director.

Senator Mercado. We can submit this to the best judgment of the body, Mr. President. I do not have any strong feelings for or against confirmation. Not being a member of the Commission on Appointments, I would like to throw this to our Colleagues and find out what their feelings are on this matter.

Senator Guingona. On the term of office, may we know the rationale behind these seven years, five years, three years, rather than have a smaller group of professionals, dedicated Commissioners, to really serve in the body, instead of rotating, because this takes the concept of a rotation, staggered?

Senator Mercado. Yes, staggered.

Senator Guingona. Would the distinguished Sponsor yield to having a permanent core of representatives of the major languages rather than, staggered basis?

Senator Mercado. Yes. For the representatives of the academe. For example, I think it would be better to have a Commissioner appointed on a permanent basis. After all research work in the field of linguistics may take some time. I think we can benefit from knowledge that is

gained from years of study by experts and academicians.

Senator Guingona. And, perhaps, from media, from the Tagalog, Visayan, Ilocano, Pangasinan, the major languages may be assured, because they have a more decisive influence in the shaping of a national language.

Senator Mercado. That is a truism, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. And, perhaps, also in the medium of instruction to the schools, because as long as the medium of instruction remains aligned to them, the less progress we will have on this matter.

Senator Mercado. We agree, Mr. President.

Senator Guingona. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Mercado. Thank you.

The President. Any other interpellation? Senator Aquino.

Senator Aquino. Can I ask just two questions, Mr. President?

The President. Please proceed.

Senator Aquino. Thank you, Mr. President.

Is it the intention of this bill to coordinate, promote researches for development, propagate, preserve, which I feel are being done by the present body?

Senator Mercado. Yes, that is the reason why we are converting it from the *Surian* to the Commission, and we are changing its character by including in the commission representatives of the major languages.

These functions are being done now, but in compliance with the constitutional requirement, we are making sure that it is not only Tagalog that is represented.

Senator Aquino. Is it the intention of this bill to make Filipino eventually the medium of instruction in schools?

Senator Mercado. By the year 2000, it is hoped that

it will be broad enough to be used as a medium of instruction.

Senator Aquino. Because at present, I understand that Cebuano is still being used as a medium of instruction in Cebu and Mindanao. So, are we planning to change that to Filipino?

Senator Mercado. Not necessarily, Mr. President. In fact, I think it is a truism in education that the medium of instruction must be one widely used and understood by the population. All major languages have their limitations. Thus, it is necessary to have a national language that is accepted and used broadly as possible.

Senator Aquino. What we have to decide is to be pro-active in propagating Filipino and convince every Filipino to use this language, including Congress, or are we going to allow this to evolve in a more natural way that might take generations? I suppose these are the two concepts. Which one are we adopting, a more pro-active way or natural evolution?

Senator Mercado. Yes, indeed we cannot just wait. The experience of Indonesia has been cited as an example. They had a strong President who was firm in making Bahasa the national language. They required its usage, and now it is not only widely accepted, it is broadly used especially in education. I believe that, to a certain extent, our lack of unity as a people is due to lack of a national language.

The President. Is this matter not already decided by the Constitution? Under the Constitution, "the Government shall take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as language of instruction in the educational system."

Then again it says, "For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English." These matters are already decided in the Constitution.

Senator Aquino. Yes, Mr. President. That means the Cebuans are violating the Constitution because their medium of instruction is Cebuano.

The President. That is the conclusion of the Gentleman.

Senator Aquino. [Laughing] I have been informed that the medium of instruction in Cebu is Cebuano, that is why I am asking if it is part of the plan to eventually change that to Filipino. I think we all need one national language. It is a matter of how we intend to implement this: by active push or natural evolution. That is what I am asking.

Senator Mercado. The matter of implementation of law, Mr. President, as we all know, is vested on the Executive branch. Our function here is just to make a policy pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution.

Senator Aquino. Then in that case maybe, we should require the Commission to meet regularly: not once a week, especially, if we are thinking of asking them to translate books. At the rate they are going, it will take several generations if they are going to meet once a week only.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, there will be researchers that will be doing continuous work, and a secretariat that will perform functions that are not going to be dependent on just a few projects. This is going to be a continuing effort.

Senator Aquino. Is the Senator objecting to a full time working Commission? Meaning to say, they meet regularly everyday from Monday to Friday.

Senator Mercado. The Chairman and the two Deputy Commissioners shall serve on a full time basis. The rest of the Commissioners shall serve upon call by the Chairman to attend meetings and to perform relevant functions. They can meet as often as they wish.

But, as I said, the core staff, who is going to be technical, shall be composed of experts in linguistics, and they will work full time.

Senator Aquino. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Mayroon po lamang akong gustong itanong: Iyong *Institute of Language* yata, ang tawag

doon ngayon, is it the Institute of...

Senator Mercado. Opo.

The President. Gaano ang *appropriation* na ibinibigay natin sa kanila?

Senator Mercado. Hindi ko po natatandaan. Siguro ang taga-Pangulo ng *Education Committee* ay makapagbibigay sa atin ng impormasyon.

Si Senator Angara po ang Chairman ng Education Committee.

Senator Angara. I do not know the exact amount, but it does not exceed P20 million a year.

The President. Let us assume that that is the figure. Under this law, how much appropriation are they providing for?

Senator Angara. If I am not mistaken, P150 million.

Senator Mercado. Yes, Mr. President, P50 million.

Senator Angara. Yes, we are appropriating P150 million for the work of the Commission, Mr. President.

The President. Considering our financial constraints...

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, may I interject. Originally, the proposal was for P150 million, but when it was reported out, the Committee amendments reduced the appropriation to P50 million as per the Committee recommendation.

Senator Angara. I stand corrected, Mr. President.

The President. How many personnel are there now in the institute?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, the resource person from the Department of Education is not here, but we can provide the same information later.

The President. I will indicate the thrust of my question. I am a little apprehensive that we are just expanding the present Institute, without improving the quality of the work being done. In other words, is it a source of patronage?

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, we can avoid this by seeing to it that the Commission will draw its personnel from the existing bureaucracy. The Department of Education, I believe, can provide some personnel. The academic community, the State University, and other academic institutions can also provide people. We do not have to employ new people. I have stated in previous instances, that what we can do when we organize new offices is to draw personnel from the existing bureaucracy. No new appointments.

Senator Herrera. Mr. President.

The President. Senator Herrera is recognized.

Senator Herrera. Thank you, Mr. President. My concern about this bill is that it has certain assumptions which, I think, are not in their correct perspective.

First, the bill assumes that we do not have a national language. I really disagree with that. If we go all over the country now, everybody is talking in Filipino, Tagalog-based. I think, we have to be realistic about that. And to say that the main intention is to develop and promote the Filipino language, to me, is something that is not realistic because what is happening, whether it is in Cebu or in the Muslim areas, people understand Tagalog or call it "Filipino," if he may, and that is our national language now. So, to me, that is a defective assumption.

The other point is, there is an assumption that if we will make it a commission with 17 commissioners, the work will improve. I do not think so. To me, it is unnecessary to bloat the bureaucracy. The present institute is sufficient enough. Maybe, let us add the budget. But come to think of it, we have 17 commissioners; that is as good as the full attendance of the Senate. Imagine having 17 commissioners.

To me, it is something that will not be received well

by our people. I do not think that we need 17 or 13 commissioners.

Senator Mercado. The Committee Report recommends 13 commissioners. There is a proposal from Senator Pimentel to remove the representative of the Judiciary and the Executive Branch; that will make it 11. That will be the number.

Precisely, what is being done here is to broaden the representation, to define how the commission will be composed, and to see to it that all major languages are represented. We are reorganizing what is in existence cognizant of the fact that there are other languages in the Philippines, and they should participate in the development of a national language. I agree that the Filipino language, Tagalog-based, is broadly spoken, it is a *lingua franca*; but as a language used for formal communication in the government and also for education, we still have to develop it fully. It is not enough that a language is spoken and used widely in conversations, in television, over the radio and in the movies. I think we must enrich it by having its formal structure defined and propagated.

Senator Herrera. Eventually, that will come even without necessarily imposing that. My feeling here is that, let us give an additional budget to the present institute. I think that is what is needed. But to create a new commission with 13 or 17 commissioners, and then next year, they will come back and say, "Look, I need an assistant. I need two clerks. I need my own budget. I need a new Pajero in my office," that will be taxing the government at this time. I think we should be very cautious on this. Since we are now in a sort of economic crisis, let us just give additional funds to the present institute, and let us re-examine this next year. To me, that is a practical approach. By giving P150 million for this Commission I expect next year, they will lobby for additional P50 million. We cannot afford that, and there are more urgent matters, I think that our government should take care of.

I go along with the idea of providing them, maybe, P50 million, as suggested here by the Sponsor. Let us give P50 million to the present institute. And then, let us see what will come out, with that additional budget. If it is really necessary later that we should have a commission, then we may consider it, but not now.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, we are amenable to the P50 million amendment of the Committee. In fact, I do not see any quarrel if Senator Herrera agrees to the appropriation of P50 million. Now, our only disagreement is on the question of whether we should restructure the commission or not.

Our contention is that we must see to it that we include, among the commissioners, representatives of the various languages, structure it in such a manner that we have a representative from the media, we have a representative from the academic community, and a formal core of linguists who will do research. After we give them the P50 million--as Senator Herrera agrees with this appropriation--we can monitor it on a year-to-year basis. We can ask for reports on a yearly basis and evaluate their performance.

Senator Herrera. My worry here is that we might be defeating the purpose of giving them P50 million by creating new positions, because that money will not be enough to pay for the commissioners, their assistants and their secretaries, the transportation costs, et cetera, especially that the commissioners will represent various regions. Every time they meet here in Manila, there will be travel costs. So, why not give the P50 million to the present institute and let them improve their activities, without necessarily adding more people, creating new positions?

Mr. President, we have created some positions recently. We have the Tripartite Wage Board; we did not provide funds for that. They are asking for funds. These are now existing offices.

Now, we will be appointing commissioners, 13 or 17 commissioners. Eventually also, they will come back and say: "Look, how can we perform? We do not have funds."

So if we give P50 million and we create 13 offices of commissioners, the P30 million will just go to salaries and wages and traveling expenses. To me, let us give the P50 million to the present institute and let them improve the quality of their activities there, and let us say: "Maybe, next year, it might be already the opportune time to decide whether we will have to create a position for 13 or 17 commissioners."

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, if we will just allow the present institute to go on without changing the structure, later on, we will have complaints from the Cebuanos, the Warays, those who speak Ilonggo or Hiligaynon, Pangalatok, that the language has been so developed to their prejudice and it did not draw from their languages.

There is a solution to the problem that Senator Herrera has raised. As I mentioned previously, I am sure there are Ilonggo-speaking, Cebuano-speaking experts in the bureaucracy, in the Department of Education, the academe, and in the state universities who can be transferred to this Commission without necessarily creating new positions. We can carve this office out of the existing bureaucracy in the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and also the academic community.

Senator Herrera. That is precisely my point, Mr. President. We are the ones creating problems for the Cebuanos and the other areas by giving the impression that we are imposing. Right now, it is being accepted. As I said, it is unrealistic to say that we do not have a national language. We have a national language which is Tagalog-based. But if we keep on harping on this, then we will have the people in Cebu and other areas saying, "No, we would like Cebuano to be the national language." We should not provide them with any reason to resist.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, we cannot just sit back and passively allow a language to develop. The national language that we envision to be developed will be used in official communications, also in the educational institutions, so there must be some formal structure. We cannot depend on radio, television, and the media to do it. We cannot assume that it does not require guidance.

Senator Herrera. As I said, it will come later. In fact, if the Gentleman will remember, in 1987, when somebody here spoke in Tagalog, there was a resistance from the Cebuano Senators. Right now, the Cebuano Senators are themselves speaking in Tagalog. We do not have to impose this thing. In many offices now, they are using Tagalog or Filipino as the medium of communication. In my own union, our memorandum now is in Tagalog. It is unthinkable a year ago, but that is what we

are doing now. There is gradual acceptance of a Tagalog-based national language.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, I would like to invite my good friend, Senator Herrera, to show me where in this particular measure in Senate Bill No. 209 is there anything that even hints at imposition of a language on the Cebuanos? In fact, it is the reverse.

In the measure, we are creating a body that ensures that a representative of the Cebuanos sits as a Commissioner.

The President. By the way, it seems to me that the debate is a little academic, because there is a provision already in the Constitution--Section 9, Article XIV--that "Congress shall establish a national language commission composed of representatives of various regions and disciplines which shall undertake, coordinate, and promote researches, for the development, propagation, and preservation of Filipino and other languages." Nandiyan na iyan.

Senator Herrera. I am aware of that, but the Constitution does not say that we do it now. Maybe, we should attend to other important problems. We can delay that. That is not very urgent; that will only divide the country.

Senator Mercado. Mr. President, sometimes when there are other pressing problems, we feel that matters like culture, language are not that important. But I would like to dare say that, to my mind, language is one of the main pillars for our own unity and development. It is precisely at this time that we need the commission; first, to guide and systematize the evolution and the development of our national language. This function cannot be just delegated to mass media. We have to accelerate the formal development of Filipino as a language. This is our identity --our very soul.

SUSPENSION OF THE SESSION

The President. The Majority Floor Leader.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, I ask that we have our usual break.

The President. The session is suspended for our

usual break, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:33 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF THE SESSION

At 5:51 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION
OF SENATE BILL NO. 209

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, I move that we suspend consideration of this measure.

The President. Is there any objection? [*Silence*]
Hearing none, the motion is approved.

Senator Guingona. Tomorrow, Mr. President, we are scheduled to take up the Overseas Workers' Development Fund, and continue with the bill regulating foreign investments. We will also take up the bill creating the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and, if we have time, the National Language Commission.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE SESSION

I move that we adjourn the session until three o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

The President. The session is adjourned until three o'clock tomorrow afternoon, if there is no objection. [*There was none.*]

It was 5:52 p.m.