

RECORD OF THE SENATE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2001

OPENING OF THE SESSION

At 3:32 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Franklin M. Drilon, called the session to order.

The President. The 33rd session of the First Regular Session of the Twelfth Congress is hereby called to order.

We shall be led in prayer by Sen. Noli "Kabayan" De Castro.

Everybody rose for the prayer.

PRAYER

Senator De Castro.

Diyos kopo, marapat na Ikaw ay aming pasalamatan sa mensaheng ipinaabot Mo sa akin. At siguro po ang ibang senador ay nakatanggap din na pinadaan Mo sa *text*:

At hayaan Mo pong ibahagi ko ang mensaheng ito sa ating kapwa senador, sa mamamayan ng mahal nating bansa, at sa mga mamamayan ng daigdig na ngayon ay humaharap sa krisis ng terorismo.

Sa *text* ay sinabi Mo po, Diyos ko, na nangako Ka na hindi namin haharapin ang buhay na nag-iisa. Sapagkat kung kami ay manlulumo sa harap ng pakikibaka, hindi kami mananaig ng dahil sa aming sariling lakas, kung hindi dahil sa Iyo.

Amen.

ROLL CALL

The President. The Secretary will please call the roll.

The Secretary, reading:

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| Senator Edgardo J. Angara | Present |
| Senator Teresa Aquino-Oreta | Present |
| Senator Joker P. Arroyo | Present |
| Senator Robert Z. Barbers | Present |
| Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon | Present |
| Senator Renato L. <i>Compañero</i> Cayetano ... | Present |
| Senator Noli "Kabayan" L. De Castro | Present |
| Senator Luisa "Loi" P. Ejercito Estrada | Present |
| Senator Juan M. Flavier | Present |
| Senator Gregorio B. Honasan | Present |

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| Senator Robert S. "JAWO" Jaworski | Present |
| Senator Panfilo M. Lacson | Present |
| Senator Loren B. Legarda Leviste | Present |
| Senator Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr. | Present |
| Senator Blas F. Ople | Present* |
| Senator John Henry R. Osmeña | ** |
| Senator Sergio R. Osmeña III | Present |
| Senator Francis N. Pangilinan | Present |
| Senator Aquilino Q. Pimentel Jr. | Present |
| Senator Ralph G. Recto | Present* |
| Senator Ramon B. Revilla | Present |
| Senator Vicente C. Sotto III | Present* |
| Senator Manuel B. Villar Jr. | Present |
| The President | Present |

The President. With 20 senators present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

THE JOURNAL

Senator Tatad. Mr. President, I move that we dispense with the reading of the *Journal* of the 32nd session, October 16, 2001, and consider it approved.

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

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, I move that we proceed to the Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary will read the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

BILLS ON FIRST READING

The Secretary. Senate Bill No. 1839, entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITIZATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSET-BACKED SECURITIES MARKET IN THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Legarda Leviste

* Arrived after the roll call

** On official mission

The President. Referred to the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Trade and Commerce

The Secretary. Senate Bill No. 1840, entitled

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CREATION OF SPECIAL PURPOSE ASSET VEHICLES TO ALLOW INVESTMENT IN AND ACQUISITION OF NON-PERFORMING LOANS, REAL ESTATE AND OTHER ASSETS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Legarda Leviste

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

The Secretary. Senate Bill No. 1841, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR COMPENSATION BENEFITS AND OTHER PRIVILEGES AND INCENTIVE FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY, INCLUDING THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND ASSOCIATE JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT, EXEMPTING THEM AND THEIR PERSONNEL FROM THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6758, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SALARY STANDARDIZATION LAW, AND AMENDING FOR THE SAID PURPOSE SECTION 1 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1949

Introduced by Senator Pangilinan

The President. Referred to the Committees on Justice and Human Rights; Civil Service and Government Reorganization; Ways and Means; and Finance.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

BILL ON SECOND READING
S. No. 1824—**Optional Reserved Officers
Training Corps Program**
(Continuation)

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 1824 as reported out under Committee Report No. 3.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 1824 is now in order.

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, we are still in the period of interpellations. I move that we recognize Sen. Renato L. Compañero Cayetano, the sponsor of the measure.

The President. Senator Cayetano, the principal sponsor, is recognized.

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, Sen. Robert S. Jaworski has a clarificatory question.

The President. Sen. Robert S. "JAWO" Jaworski is recognized.

Senator Jaworski. Thank you, Mr. President.

May we just be enlightened on the present provision of the law relative to ROTC—Commonwealth Act No. 1 or the National Defense Act—which provided for the obligatory military service of all citizens of the Philippines. However, this law was later amended by then President Marcos through Presidential Decree No. 1706 or the National Service Law.

Presidential Decree No. 1706 provided that the terms "military service" and "military training" referred to in Commonwealth Act No. 1 or the National Defense Act shall mean "national service and training for national service." And as we said before, "national service" under Presidential Decree No. 1706 consists not only of military service but it also includes civic welfare service and law enforcement service.

Now, Republic Act No. 7077, or the Citizen Armed Forces Reservist Act, provided anew for mandatory military training pursuant to the provisions of the National Defense Act, presumably doing away with the other options of civic welfare service and law enforcement service.

We are aware, Mr. President, that latter enactments supersede earlier laws. However, we wish to be enlightened if Republic Act No. 7077 has impliedly repealed the National Service Law, thus reverting to the mandatory military service provision of the National Defense Act.

Mr. President, I am asking this for enlightenment in view of the proposed issuance of the Revised Rules and Regulations to implement the National Service Law by the Executive department. Because if the National Service Law has already been repealed by Republic Act No. 7077, then there is no room for the issuance of the said IRR.

Senator Cayetano. I would like to thank the gentleman, Mr. President. I recall that he was the one who brought the matter of this Revised Rules and Regulations to implement the National Service Law drafted by the secretary of National Defense, Gen. Angelo T. Reyes.

Mr. President, as far as this representation is concerned, Republic Act No. 1706 has not been repealed, at the very least, amended, because Republic Act No. 7077 is quite clear on the restoration of ROTC as a mandatory subject. In fact, I would like to advert to Section 38 of that law, Republic Act No. 7077:

Section 38. *Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC).* — Military training for students enrolled in colleges, universities and similar institutions of learning is mandatory pursuant to the provisions of the National Defense Act and the 1987 Constitution.

And further down on the Transitory Provisions, Section 67 of the same law, it states, and I read:

SEC. 67. *Retention of ROTC Units in Colleges and Universities.* - ROTC units in colleges and universities shall continue with ROTC training in accordance with this Act.

So, in reply to the query of the gentleman, the view of this representation is that PD No. 1706 which provides for the so-called "National Service Law" has been partly amended with respect to making ROTC already mandatory. And for that reason when Secretary Reyes was here yesterday, I called his attention to this. Although he gave his own view on the matter, without expressing any particular objection to the view that Republic Act No. 7077 has restored ROTC as a mandatory subject, he merely said that these particular rules are supposed to address the problem of ROTC particularly in Metro Manila. But he did accept however the proposition that this Chamber, together with the Lower House, has indeed the plenary power to make this program optional. And finally, he advised me that the President has not even approved these rules and regulations.

So as far as these rules and regulations are concerned, we can consider these a mere scrap of paper, Mr. President.

Senator Jaworski. Mr. President, I am not a lawyer but my little understanding of the words "pursuant to the provisions of the National Defense Act" is a very strong worded part of a provision. And therefore if it says "pursuant to the provisions of the National Defense Act" which is PD No. 1706, then it is still in effect, is it not, Mr. President?

Senator Cayetano. No, Mr. President. The National Defense Act is Commonwealth Act No. 1.

Senator Jaworski. What I mean is, repealed by PD No. 1706.

Senator Cayetano. I would accept the view that PD No. 1706 partly amended the National Defense Act. But as the gentleman earlier said, there is the latter law which is Republic Act No. 7077

which restored ROTC as a mandatory subject in colleges and universities pursuant to the National Defense Act. That is Section 38 which I read earlier, Mr. President.

Senator Jaworski. Well, Mr. President, if the Chamber accepts this explanation, then the nonlawyer yields to the lawyer.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to compliment the gentleman. Even though he is certainly not a lawyer, he nevertheless put up an argument like a good lawyer at that.

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, Sen. Francis N. Pangilinan wishes to interpellate. I move that he be recognized.

The President. Sen. Francis N. Pangilinan is recognized.

Senator Pangilinan. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to know if Senator Cayetano would be willing to yield for a few questions.

Senator Cayetano. With great pleasure and honor, Mr. President.

Senator Pangilinan. *Maraming salamat.*

Mr. President, I had the opportunity to attend one of the out-of-town committee hearings of the Committees on Education, Arts and Culture; and National Defense and Security on this issue. And one of the points raised at that particular hearing in Cebu was the issue of who is to implement the revised—assuming that this becomes law and it is to be implemented—what agency of government is to implement the new law.

It says in the proposed bill that as far as the ROTC is concerned, it will be the Department of National Defense and as far as the alternative national service program is concerned, it might be the department concerned—the DILG, the CHED, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, et cetera. Is that not right?

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. Just a little rectification. With respect to ROTC, together with the proposed alternative programs, in addition to the establishment of optional ROTC, the secretary of National Defense, together with the Commission on Higher Education, the reason CHED is always on the list—whether it is optional ROTC or alternative service program—is that this involves students of colleges and universities. The CHED supervises universities and colleges.

Senator Pangilinan. That is right. Thank you, Mr. President.

The reason I am raising this, and I remember one of the inputs given in the committee hearing in Cebu, is that there seems to be a problem in terms of implementing the military training component of the ROTC as it stands. I remember that one of the resource persons, if I recall correctly, was a school administrator. When we asked him what his concern is about the ROTC program being implemented in his university, his response was to the effect that he knew little of how the program was being administered because it was the DND rather than his school or his university that was implementing the program.

The reason I am raising this, Mr. President, is my own observation that the school administration does not take an active role in the implementation of the ROTC program even if it is optional. My understanding, based on the inputs, is that this is where the issue of graft and corruption comes in. I remember the cosponsorship speech of Senator Magsaysay. He mentioned that one of the reasons for the need to amend the law is that the ROTC training program has become a source of graft and corruption.

Kung ganito ang magiging sitwasyon, Ginoong Pangulo, when this optional ROTC is implemented, will it still be the DND or will there be a tighter coordination between the DND and the CHED? Dahil ang lumalabas nga in terms of operations, walang alam o kakaunti ang kaalaman ng school administrator—ang principal o kaya ang pangulo ng pamantasan at ipanapaubaya na lamang sa sinasabing kinatawan ng DND sa kanilang administrasyon o sa kanilang pamantasan.

Senator Cayetano. *Totoo po iyon, mahal na Pangulo. Dito sa Republic Act No. 7077, kung saan muling ginagawang mandatory ang ROTC, ang talagang namamahala dito ay iyong mga commandant na nanggagaling sa Office of the Secretary of National Defense whether it is the air force, army, or navy. Wala po talagang partisipasyon dito ang mga eskuwelahan—universities and colleges—except to enroll the students doon sa units ng ROTC sa pamamagitan naman ng rules and regulations na ipinamamahagi ng CHED.*

Totoo po iyon, mahal na Pangulo, na kasama namin si Senator Pangilinan, at isa siya sa mga vice chairmen ng Committee on Education, Arts and Culture at talagang narinig namin na sinasabi o ipinapahiwatig ng school administrators and presidents na wala nga silang partisipasyon kundi i-enroll lamang itong mga estudyante at pinababayaan na iyong training aspect sa opisina ng secretary of National Defense.

Senator Pangilinan. As a matter of fact, *naalala ko iyong isang school administrator nang tinanong po natin sa kaniya kung kumporme ba siya na ipaubaya na lamang sa DND o mas*

makakabuti kaya sa ating mga kabataang estudyante na mabigyan ng papel ang administrador ng pamantasan o ng unibersidad dito sa pag-iimplementa ng ROTC law. At ang sabi po ng isang school administrator, kung siya daw ang tatanungin, una, kaya nilang i-implement ang programa, the school administrator can implement the program if it is optional. And second, they would prefer to implement the program because by doing so, they are made to account for the program itself unlike the current situation wherein they are not in charge, they are only the collecting agents. It is the DND that is supervising it, and at the end of the day, pag nagreklamo ang mga estudyante, pag nagreklamo ang mga magulang, nagtitinginan na lamang sila dahil wala nga silang awtoridad dito sa programa as it stands.

Senator Cayetano. *Totoo po iyon, Ginoong Pangulo. Narinig po naming lahat iyan. Kaya natin nirerebisa ngayon, and maybe this is a good time as any na siguro ilagay natin dito sa ating panukalang-batas na hindi lamang ang Department of National Defense ang mamamahala sa mga trainee, mga ROTC na later on who would opt to enroll in the ROTC program kundi isama rin natin ang mga administrador ng mga kolehiyo at unibersidad.*

Pero ito po ang palagay ko sa pamamagitan ng asosasyon. Mayroon pong mga asosasyon ang mga state universities and colleges at saka iyong private universities. Kaya nga doon sa ating programa na nilagay ay isinama natin ang CHED. At pagkatapos itong tinatawag na Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), iyon po ay nasa Section 6, page 3, ng ating panukalang-batas, at saka iyong Coordinating Council of Private Educational Association of the Philippines or COCOPEA, and the University of the Philippines. Ang dahilan nga po riyang ay iyong ating napakinggan na parang mga complaint or suggestion ng mga administrador ng kolehiyo at unibersidad na ating pinakinggan na huwag ipaubaya 100% iyong ROTC sa mga militar lamang.

Senator Pangilinan. So, Mr. President, I think at the proper time, during amendments, we can make proposals to strengthen the supervisory nature of the other entities apart from, but including, I suppose, the DND.

Senator Cayetano. By all means, Mr. President. I will only be too glad to see that proposed amendment at the proper time.

Senator Pangilinan. Thank you, Mr. President. Again at the proper time, in Section 3, page 2, letter (b), *ang nakalagay po rito sa Civil Welfare Service, participating in free education program for out-of-school youth.*

This is laudable. I have no objections. *Ang iniisip ko lamang, again during amendments, kung papayag si Senator Cayetano as*

sponsor, I see the need also for us to look into the possibility of somehow augmenting the teaching force of the CAT. I am told that there is a shortage of teachers in formal elementary institutions or formal educational institutions in the elementary level, particularly the public school system. Maybe during the period of amendments, *kung papayag po ang ating principal sponsor, baka puwede ring isama hindi lamang ang mga out-of-school youth kundi ang ating mga estudyante sa elementarya kung saan nagkukulang ang mga guro tulad ng pagtuturo ng mathematics, ng reading, at mga pagsusulat.*

Maybe at the right time, if Senator Cayetano is willing, we can also include programs for... well, I cannot think of the term for the moment, but free education programs also for our additional teaching loads, providing teaching loads to volunteers or optional volunteering for college students who are willing to teach in the elementary public schools. Something to that effect, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. As I said, we will only be too glad to look at that proposed amendment at the proper period. Perhaps, the distinguished gentleman is thinking of somebody like a proctor or a teaching assistant.

Senator Pangilinan. Teaching assistants or tutorial services *para iyong marami nating mga kabataan, lalo na iyong ating mga college student, maaari silang mag-volunteer para ma-augment ang pangangailangan ng ating mga kabataang elementarya na maturuan ng basic writing skills, reading skills at pati na rin iyong mathematics.*

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President, we are going to be very receptive together with my cosponsor, Senator Magsaysay, on that matter.

Senator Pangilinan. Thank you, Mr. President.

Sa Section 4 ng nabanggit na panukalang-batas, nakalagay po rito on page 2, line 25, "...formulate and adopt a one-summer program of optional Reserve Officers Training Corps." Ang aking pag-unawa sa ngayon, ito ay dalawang taon, every weekend, hindi po ba?

Senator Cayetano. *Tama po iyan.* ROTC is a two-year course taken during weekends.

Senator Pangilinan. And we are, as proposed, replacing it with a one-summer program.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. This is the particular baby of my coach here, Senator Magsaysay. *Ito po ay isang goal niya. Magandang pag-usapan natin ito sapagkat mayroon pong mga komentaryo rito, and certainly, we would like to listen*

to the distinguished gentleman *kung ano ang kaniyang paningin dito, because I am sure that my cosponsor would also like to listen to the comments on this particular substitute ROTC program—instead of a two-year weekend course for ROTC, it is now going to be a one-time summer course for ROTC.*

Senator Pangilinan. Yes. Again, Mr. President, at the right time, perhaps, we can come up with a definite period. What does one summer mean? Does that mean one month, two months, one month and a half?

But I would like to input that I was a summer program graduate of military training—MS11, MS12, MS21, and MS22. *Lahat po iyan kinuha ko sa isang summer. Dalawang buwan ho iyon mula alas siyete ng umaga hanggang ala-una ng hapon, araw-araw mula Lunes hanggang Biyernes. Nangitim ako nang husto dahil summer iyon. Natapos naman sa awa ng Diyos. So for every MS, ang lumalabas po, Mr. President, ay 10 days. So if there were four MSs, that would be a total of 40 days. Ten days for the first MS, another 10 days for the next MS, and so forth and so on, totaling six hours a day. We had marching in the early part of the morning dahil hindi mainit at pagdating ng araw at mainit na, teoriya naman ang pinag-usapan, nasa classroom na po kami. Nababanggit ko lamang ito dahil maganda sigurong gawin nating mas... during the proper time again, Mr. President, let us be more specific about the period. Because in the end, I believe, correct me if I am wrong, that this is still a requirement for graduation.*

Senator Cayetano. Yes, definitely, Mr. President, whether it is optional or the alternative. It is mandatory that a student should take either the ROTC as an optional course or the alternative program.

Pagdating po ng panahon, Mr. President, certainly, we will listen to the distinguished gentleman. Kaya siguro masasabi ko as an aside observation, kaya pala itong ating kaibigang si Senator Pangilinan ay makisig ang tindig kagaya ni Senator Biazon, siya pala ay kumuha ng apat na summer ng ROTC.

Senator Pangilinan. *Tama po iyon, Ginoong Pangulo. Dahil nga ang naging karanasan ko ay sa halip na pumunta every weekend for two years sa unibersidad upang mag-training, nagkaroon po ng kaunting conflict. Ang laro ko po sa varsity ay weekend din kaya ako ay napagbigyan. Ngunit iyon nga po ang requirement—I had to fulfill the entire two-year program in two months. So one month—one year.*

Senator Cayetano. *Ginoong Pangulo, gaya ng sinabi ko, ang tindig at kisig niya ay ganoon na lamang kung kaya hindi naka-resist si Mrs. Pangilinan.*

Senator Pangilinan. *Hindi lamang po sa military training, Ginoong Pangulo, ang dahilan kung bakit.*

Thank you, Mr. President.

In addition, Mr. President, again at the proper time, and just as a reiteration, hopefully, we can have a clearer definition of the term "one summer program."

Senator Cayetano. Yes, my cosponsor is nodding his head, Mr. President. Definitely, we will anticipate the amendments at the proptime.

Senator Pangilinan. On page 3, Mr. President, *nakalagay po rito sa line 1*, "Students electing to enlist in the ROTC Program shall not be assessed or charged any fee..."

Nabanggit na po ito sa interpellation noong nakaraang araw. Hindi katulad ngayon na may bayad ang ROTC, hindi po ba?

Senator Cayetano. *Mayroon po. At gaya ng sinabi ko, ang pinakamababa yata ay P300 at ang pinakamataas, depende sa eskwelahan, ay P1,000. Tama po itong line 1. Ito po ang suhestiyon ng ating cosponsor na si Senador Magsaysay.*

Senator Pangilinan. *Ang inaalaala ko lamang po rito, Ginoong Pangulo...* Of course, the premise here is that the law, as it is implemented at the moment, allows the charging of fees because we can assume with certainty that implementing ROTC at this time will incur expenses. *Magkakaroon po ng gastos.*

Senator Cayetano. Definitely, Mr. President, because at the very least, *iyon pong gastos sa requirements gaya ng uniform, sapatos... At siyempre naman kumakain. Hindi naman nagbibigay ng meryenda pero mayroon talagang gastos.*

Senator Pangilinan. *At ang inaalaala ko po, Ginoong Pangulo, kung sa ngayon ay may gastusin ang ROTC, I do not think, when it becomes optional, that the expenses will go away.*

So the question here would be, perhaps, the expenses will be lessened because not many will be participating in the program. *Mababawasan ng bahagya o di kaya ng malaki ngunit may gastos pa rin.*

Ito po ang aking tanong: Sino ang gagastos ngayon dito? Ang gobyerno po ba?

Senator Cayetano. *Iyon po ang humalabas, Ginoong Pangulo. Sa mga pagtatanong ng marami nating kaibigan dito ay talagang naisip nila na gawing attractive iyong Optional ROTC Program.*

I recall the other day that my *kababayan* from Bulacan, Senator Ople, precisely wants to ensure that the Optional ROTC Program will be so attractive that the requirement of the State for maintaining a minimum number of reserve men and women in the force will not be depleted. *Na talagang pagandahin ito at ang isa sa pagpapaganda ay bawasan, kung hindi man lahat ay partly, itong mga binabayaran ngayon.*

Kung ito po ay babawasan, ang mangyayari rito ay isang ahensiya lamang ang magso-shoulder nito, and, of course, this will be the national government, through the Department of National Defense. Iyon po ay medyo masalimuot na problema.

Senator Pangilinan. *Maraming salamat po, Ginoong Pangulo.*

Sa Section 5 naman po, iyong sinasabing Establishment of Alternative National Service Programs, I think this is in relation to Section 3, Alternative National Service Programs.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Pangilinan. *Ang tanong ko po rito ay: Will we be limited to (a) and/or (b)? In Section 3, I am sorry. Sorry, if I am backtracking a bit, but it is related to Section 5. In the event, for example, in the future there are other programs that may be formulated—wala po rito, halimbawa, ang human rights awareness program or it is a bit controversial pero mga anti-terrorism program or what have you—perhaps if the sponsor will be amenable, at the right time again, during the period of amendments, we can add a phrase or a provision that will allow some leeway for the agencies concerned to formulate programs that they may deem necessary or relevant given the circumstances.*

Senator Cayetano. As a general proposition, Mr. President, let me say that it is true there are only two proposed alternative programs. But I know that a number of our colleagues here... Actually, Sen. Serge R. Osmeña III has already indicated that he would propose a third alternative program when his time comes.

As a reply to the gentleman, yes, these two alternative programs are right here in the bill but, certainly, we can add either a phrase or an additional alternative program for that matter.

Senator Pangilinan. Mr. President, I will reserve the opportunity to ask further questions at some other time. In the meantime, I have no further questions.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Legarda Leviste. Mr. President, I move that we recognize Sen. Joker P. Arroyo for his interpellation.

The President. Sen. Joker P. Arroyo is recognized.

Senator Arroyo. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, am I correct when I say that 80 percent of the officer corps of our armed forces come from ROTC? Would that be a fair statement?

I got that figure from the officers of the Association of Philippine Colleges and Universities. Where they got that, I do not know. But that is what they claim.

Senator Cayetano. From the resource staffs who were here yesterday, for every 100 enlisted men, there is a need for 10 officers. So, that is correct—10 percent. But I am not very sure that this 10 percent only comes from ROTC because there are other sources of the officer corps, for instance, the Philippine Military Academy. Definitely, that is a permanent source of officer corps of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. But I do not know. Maybe my cosponsor, Senator Magsaysay, would know where the 10 percent officer corps comes from.

Senator Arroyo. I will go back to that, Mr. President, so that we would have more coherence in the question and answer.

Commonwealth Act No. 1, which was the basis of our National Defense Act, was anchored on the 1935 Constitution. Now, we have the 1986 Constitution.

The foundation of our reserve system in the armed forces springs from two principal provisions in the Constitution, namely: Section 4 of Article II of the Constitution, which reads:

The prime duty of the Government is to serve and protect the people. The Government may call upon the people to defend the State and, in the fulfillment thereof, all citizens may be required, under conditions provided by law, to render personal military or civil service.

Under this provision the government can compel citizens to render military service. I think we will have no argument over that.

But there is the provision which refers to the composition of our armed services which is in Section 4 of Article XVI. It states:

The Armed Forces of the Philippines shall be composed of a citizen armed force which shall undergo military training and serve, as may be provided by law. It shall keep a regular force necessary for the security of the State.

In other words, this provision contemplates both the regular force and the reserve force. The regular force, I think, is not under discussion. What is under discussion is, "the Armed Forces of the Philippines shall be composed of a citizen armed force which shall undergo military training and serve, as may be provided by law."

We have a law, Mr. President, which is the CAFGU law. The nomenclature—all capital letters "CAFGU," C-A-F-G-U—which is derived from the word "CAF" coming from the words "citizen armed force," then the "GU" is "geographical units." That is why if we combine the two, it becomes CAFGU.

Now, the CAFGU, Mr. President, was issued pursuant to an executive order when the President still exercised legislative powers. And the "geographical units" was included so that each province will have somehow a reserve force within its own province.

Now, the citizen armed force, which we call the reservists, will naturally also have officers, thus, the "reserve officer training corps." This is the ROTC that is supposed to officer "the citizen armed force."

My question, Mr. President, is this: We need ROTC reserve officers so that we would have officers for our citizen armed force.

Now, just what is the strength of our reserve force? The Defense and AFP officers were here yesterday.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. I recall that by the year 2011, the 15-year program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines shall have about 400,000 reserve force.

Senator Arroyo. There will be 400,000 reserve force. Under the ratio that the gentleman mentioned, Mr. President, we should have a ratio of about how many officers to a man?

Senator Cayetano. The ratio is about 100 to 10.

Senator Arroyo. So, 10 percent, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. So, if we have at its peak 400,000 reservists, then we should have 40,000 reserve officers.

Senator Cayetano. That is correct, by the year 2011.

Senator Arroyo. We should have 40,000 reserve officers to lead the citizen armed force.

Again, I got from the data provided me—and they requested me to ask this question—that according to the APCU, the Association of Philippine Colleges and Universities, 500,000 cadets are graduated every year. I am willing to be corrected.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Is it correct that we graduate 500,000 cadets every year?

Senator Cayetano. What I was furnished by the resource speaker coming from the Armed Forces of the Philippines is that there are 500,000 enrollees in the basic ROTC and there are 250,000 graduates every year for basic ROTC—two years ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. Now, as we all understand—we have gone through ROTC—those who undergo basic become noncommissioned officers.

Senator Cayetano. No, Mr. President. They normally will be...

Senator Arroyo. After two years.

Senator Cayetano. After two years, in all likelihood, most of them will be enlisted men. Some will be noncommissioned, I think, from staff sergeant.

Senator Arroyo. That is the noncommissioned officers.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, but very few of them.

Senator Arroyo. Because the noncommissioned officers are the sergeants.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Now, how many of them take the advanced course so that they will become officers?

Senator Cayetano. From the figure I was furnished yesterday, for instance, Mr. President, I recall that for the period 1999-2000 school year, the graduates of basic ROTC are about 131,000 and a little over 2,000 went to advanced ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. So those who go to advanced ROTC are those who, after they finish the advanced course, will be commissioned as reserve officers.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, they will be commissioned as reserve officers.

Senator Arroyo. Can the gentleman give me an idea, Mr. President, how many reserve officers we are producing?

Senator Cayetano. According to our resource persons yesterday, the most ideal is what I earlier said—it is 10 percent of the reserve force. We are not being able to produce that because only very few, those who graduate from basic ROTC, go to advanced ROTC, which is one of the sources of the officer corps of the military.

Senator Arroyo. Which brings me to the point: What then is the purpose of the basic two-year ROTC course? How many do we produce every year in the basic course?

Senator Cayetano. The figure says that basic ROTC graduates are about 250,000 a year.

Senator Arroyo. A year.

Senator Cayetano. A year.

Senator Arroyo. So that is a lot of excess noncommissioned officers?

Senator Cayetano. That is right.

Senator Arroyo. We are training them for no purpose at all because they will only be sergeants, in case they are called to active service.

Senator Cayetano. Not all of them will become sergeants.

Senator Arroyo. What will they be?

Senator Cayetano. From what I recall, Mr. President, of the 100, 10 percent of that will go to advanced ROTC, which will be the source of the officer corps. Now, about 40 of the 100 will be noncommissioned officers. *Kaya iyong* 90...because 10 percent goes to advanced ROTC. So we have 90 minus 40—50.

Senator Arroyo. Which gives us, Mr. President, about 40. And 40, what is the difference?

Senator Cayetano. If we graduate, for instance, 100 basic ROTC, 10 percent of that will go to advanced ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. Which means 25,000.

Senator Cayetano. No. I am just looking at 100 only, just for the sake of example.

Senator Arroyo. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. So, if 10 percent of 100 goes to advanced ROTC, that is 10. So we leave 90.

Senator Arroyo. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. All right. Of the 90, 40 will be noncommissioned.

Senator Arroyo. Percentagewise.

Senator Cayetano. No, numerical. So if we have 90 left for basic ROTC, the noncommissioned officers, as the gentleman mentioned, 40 of them will be noncommissioned, meaning *mga* staff sergeant.

Senator Arroyo. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Cayetano. *Kaya limampu ang matitirang* enlisted men.

Senator Arroyo. All right, which brings me to the point. If 10 percent of the 250,000, which corresponds to 25,000, is what we graduate every year, is my computation correct? Ten percent, among those who take the basic course, proceed to the advanced course. Now, 250,000—10 percent of that is 25,000—these are the people who want really to be officers. So they take the advanced course. So that is 25,000 out of the 250,000.

Senator Cayetano. But the problem there, Mr. President, is, the number of graduates of basic ROTC sort of fluctuates from year to year. That is just a general figure I gave the gentleman. But the specific figure that I gave as an example, I remember, is 1999-2000 school year where about 131,000 graduated from basic ROTC. And out of 131,000, only 2,009, I believe, went to advanced ROTC, which our resource persons here really consider very low.

Senator Arroyo. Well, because there may be a table imbalance between those who would become officers and those who are willing enough to be noncommissioned officers.

Senator Cayetano. I agree with the gentleman.

Senator Arroyo. If we are going to fashion a law now, we might as well meet the problem of the correct proportion of what should be produced as officers and of noncommissioned officers to lead our reservists. There are no exact figures on just how many do we graduate in the advanced course.

Senator Cayetano. Well, let me give now the figure. I have the figure here, Mr. President. For the period 1996 to 2002,—that will be this school year—the basic ROTC will be 592,437. These are the...

Senator Arroyo. That is for one year?

Senator Cayetano. No, for six years, school year.

Senator Arroyo. So, if we divide, it is almost 600,000?

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. So that is averaging about 100,000?

Senator Cayetano. A little over, for that matter, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Well, 590,000, let us call it 600,000, divided by six is roughly 100,000 a year.

Senator Cayetano. Yes. Right.

Senator Arroyo. So, that is for the basic?

Senator Cayetano. Yes, that is the basic. And those who go to the advanced ROTC, only pitiful, only about 11,000.

Senator Arroyo. Every year?

Senator Cayetano. No, for this total—six years. So of the 600,000...

Senator Arroyo. So, for easier computation, let us call it 12,000. So we are producing only 2,000 officers a year, more or less.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, more or less. That is correct, from the ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, the reason I am asking clarification on this is that in our desire to meet the objections of our young students, we might run short of officers who would lead or man our reserve force, which is a constitutional requirement. It says that "The Armed Forces of the Philippines shall be composed of a citizen armed force which shall undergo military training and serve, as may be provided by law." Now, we have to have officers for this.

Mr. President, what is the assessment of the sponsor? If we have 400,000 reserve force over time, some of them would get old so they are replaced by younger ones. Therefore, we should have an officer corps of 40,000 at all times.

Senator Cayetano. The 400,000 is the 15-year period.

Senator Arroyo. No, no. What I really want to find out, Mr. President, is: Today, for instance, what is our reserve force?

Senator Cayetano. The reserve force?

Senator Arroyo. Yes, the reserve force. Supposing war is declared, and we will call all the reservists. Now, how many can we call?

Senator Cayetano. There is a figure given to us earlier, as of 2001, I believe, as far as the reserve force is concerned.

For 2001, we are looking at 177,000. Let us put it at 180,000.

Senator Arroyo. Give or take?

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. That is the reserve force coming from the ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. No, no, I am talking about the reserve force pursuant to this constitutional provision. This is an E.O. of the citizen armed force.

Senator Cayetano. The reason I...

Senator Arroyo. Reservists are not called all the time. These are the CAFGUs—some are good and some are no good. That is why sometimes they gain notoriety.

Senator Cayetano. Mr. President, the reserve force comes from different sources. No. 1, of course, the graduates of the ROTC. This is under Republic Act No. 7077. No. 2., the graduates of basic military training, like the PMA; No. 3, ex-service men and retired officers of the AFP and other armed forces; No. 4, recognized World War II guerillas who were honorably discharged from the service.

Senator Arroyo. Yes, but they are already old World War II guerillas. They cannot be called to service anymore.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, but nevertheless, they are listed as reservists by the law. *[Laughter]*

Then we have, of course, No. 5, the so-called commissioned and noncommissioned officers under the affiliated reserve category; and No. 6, the graduates of the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP). There are really six categories of these resources of the reservists or reserve forces, the commissioned/noncommissioned officers and privates under the existing laws including those procured under Project 3670 and included in the present AFP roster before the enactment of this Act.

So the only reason I mention ROTC is that it is the only figure that I have, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, I think that before we enact this law, we must ascertain exactly just how much is the reserve force of the armed forces as distinguished from the regular force. Because...

Senator Cayetano. The regular force, Mr. President, right now, is maintained at an average of 100,000.

Senator Arroyo. That is correct.

Senator Cayetano. As I said earlier...

Senator Arroyo. Now, how many are in the reserve force? By reserve force, we are talking here not of a reserve force in active duty but the reserve force that can be called anytime in case of an emergency.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. As I said, as of 2001, let us put in round figure 180,000. By the year 2011, we could have 400,000.

Senator Arroyo. All right.

Senator Cayetano. These come from the different sources that I mentioned.

Senator Arroyo. If, as the gentleman said, we have 180,000 for the current year—

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo.—therefore, we must produce 18,000 officers a year to meet the configuration given by the armed forces of one officer for every 10 enlisted men.

Senator Cayetano. That is right.

Senator Arroyo. So if that is the situation, can we meet the 18,000 that we need that would lead our reservists? I would think, Mr. President, that our focus should be, whether we would have enough officers in case of an emergency.

Senator Cayetano. That is right, Mr. President. That is the reason earlier, a number of our colleagues here, particularly Senators Ople and Biazon yesterday, and Senator Pangilinan today, were looking at giving incentives to basic ROTC even if it were made optional in order to attract the young men and women who are enrolled in colleges to take basic ROTC and possibly even advanced ROTC, precisely to provide the necessary reserve force that is required by the armed forces as well as the officer corps.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, what I have in mind is that

under the data provided by the sponsor, we need 18,000 officers every year. So my question is: With the present law as proposed, will we produce 18,000 officers a year?

Senator Cayetano. Well, I doubt very much, Mr. President. Even if we do not change the law and keep the ROTC mandatory, we will not also be able to reach that 18,000 officer corps. Because the law does not require graduates of basic ROTC to take advanced ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. We cannot also compel them.

Senator Cayetano. It is purely voluntary. That is why I said that, perhaps, the way to entice the graduates of basic ROTC—which we may decide to make optional—is to precisely provide incentives.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, putting incentives will cost money.

Senator Cayetano. That is true.

Senator Arroyo. That is the problem, how we can balance the interests of the need for 18,000 officers and the complaints of students. If we make this optional, can we produce 18,000 officers? How many are we producing now at the present rate? Two thousand? I heard the sponsor say we are only producing 2,000 officers a year?

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I received a note from my cosponsor. So far, the 10 percent of the officer corps have been maintained. They have been able to attain it.

Senator Arroyo. What does the sponsor mean by that?

Senator Cayetano. Well, for a reserve force of 400,000 for instance, 120,000...

Senator Arroyo. We need 40,000.

Senator Cayetano. Yes, Mr. President. Of the 400,000, 120,000 of that will come from ages 18 to 35.

Senator Arroyo. No, Mr. President. I do not think we have to talk first about the 400,000 because we do not even have that. I thought that our reserve force at the moment is 180,000.

Senator Cayetano. That is as of 2001.

Senator Arroyo. If we have a 180,000-reserve force, ergo, we must produce 18,000 reserve officers.

Senator Cayetano. At least, from the information we have gathered so far as of today we were able to maintain the 10 percent.

Senator Arroyo. Ten percent of what?

Senator Cayetano. Ten percent of the reserve force.

Senator Arroyo. The reserve force is 180,000. Now, if it is 180,000, then we must produce 18,000 officers.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Senator Cayetano. Mr. President, I move that we suspend the session for one minute.

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

It was 4:32 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:33 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

Senator Cayetano. With the permission of my colleague from Makati and the Philippines, I would like to call my cosponsor who is more adept in military figures aside from other figures. *[Laughter]*

The President. Sen. Ramon B. Magsaysay Jr. is recognized.

Senator Magsaysay. With the permission of the Chair and the gentleman from Makati, I am also adept in engineering figures, especially when the score is 93 to 88. Senator Recto is smiling broadly because he is a La Salle Greenhills alumnus and Sen. "Kiko" Pangilinan is also smiling broadly with a green-colored necktie. I do not know about Senator Arroyo. I think Senator Arroyo went to Ateneo.

Senator Arroyo. We win even as we lose. *[Laughter]*

Senator Magsaysay. We sympathize and likewise support the statement. *[Laughter]*

At any rate, Mr. President, seriously, I just got these figures from Undersecretary Ed Batenga of the Department of National Defense, showing that we have a standing 400,000 reservists at any year. This is based on year 2001 of which there are 120,000 ready reserve. Meaning, these are graduates of basic ROTC for four semesters, ages 18 to 35. The balance of 280,000 or so are on standby reserve. They are also graduates of basic ROTC, ages 36

to 51. These are the less energetic ones but who have also finished the basic ROTC. Ten percent of this 400,000 or 40,000 are officers in the reserve corps who are also college graduates. All of them are college graduates who have taken advanced ROTC for at least four years. These are the components of our reserve force as obligated under our Constitution to defend our country.

Senator Arroyo. Again, I just want to be clarified. How many reservists do we produce every year? Because from there, we can extrapolate how many officers we need. I am more worried about our officers.

Senator Magsaysay. Every year, as mentioned earlier, there are roughly between 400,000 to 500,000 taking basic ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. It would seem, Mr. President, that almost all our reservists are those who take college courses. Is that the case?

Senator Magsaysay. Well, we have our preparatory military training for high school.

Senator Arroyo. Because if that is the case, Mr. President, supposing the Philippines gets into a war and we call our reservists, does the gentleman mean that most of those who would get into action are the college students who have graduated from the basic course? In other words, the cream of the country will be the first ones called?

Senator Magsaysay. We have the Citizens Action Training of the high school also.

Senator Arroyo. Well, those are the ones who carry the wooden guns. I mean they do not really...

Senator Magsaysay. These are the ages from 17 or 18 entering college, but they are also considered to potentially become part of the ROTC once they finish two years of college.

We have to take note, Mr. President, that there are quite a lot of dropouts after high school. Say, if there are 100 students who started in the elementary school, only about 40 percent enter college. So, out of the original 100 who started in the elementary, only 40 enter college. I think that skews the projection of roughly about 250,000 basic ROTC graduates every year.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, the reason I raised this question about the figures is that our army can only be as good as the officers who lead it. If we do not have a good officer corps, then our reserve force is nothing.

Senator Magsaysay. There is also the program of the armed forces reserve. They call it AADT. This is the Annual Active Duty Training wherein reservist officers who are now professionals,

having finished college, may get promoted by going through the Annual Active Duty Training which consists of—I think, if I am not mistaken, Senator Honasan may confirm this—about 52 weeks a year of Annual Active Duty Training.

Can Senator Honasan amplify the program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on the Annual Active Duty Training?

The President. Senator Honasan is recognized.

Senator Honasan. Thank you, Mr. President.

My little contribution would be the 50 or so weeks would constitute what we call the "Sunday Soldiers." This enhances the mobilization capability of the reserve force as a strategic component of our overall defense posture, Mr. President.

Senator Magsaysay. There is also another program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense which they call "3670." It is not the age of those taking the officer's training—those who did not finish "advance" necessarily, but would like to become reserve officers. They are usually captains of industries under Republic Act No. 3670.

Senator Honasan. Mr. President, with the permission of Senator Arroyo and Senator Magsaysay.

This is actually composed of professionals who are mobilized on a regular basis, also on a yearly basis, not only for the purposes of internal or external defense but also for the purpose of disaster management, relief operations and such civic duties and activities.

Senator Magsaysay. This is ongoing. I myself attended the Class of 1973 based on Republic Act No. 3670, wherein we were lumped together with Pocholo Razon, Henry Cojuangco and several others. We were a batch of 36 who went through this training. So I was promoted to commander in the Philippine Navy.

Senator Honasan. Mr. President, now that we have allowed Senator Arroyo to take a short break, let me add, pursuing the point that has been raised by Senator Arroyo, that these reservists, this component of the reservist program, not only in terms of inventory, our actual manpower component is in shambles.

I was explaining to the honorable distinguished sponsor that it takes them one year to requisition one set of uniform which is the only incentive because these are professionals who have fantasized about a military career aside from their own professions and vocations.

But then, this is a resource in terms of information-gathering that has not been tapped to the optimum. And I just want to take

the opportunity, Mr. President, to input this in the discussion because I believe the impact of this particular legislation will carry over to the overall reservist program.

Senator Magsaysay. Well, Mr. President, now that we have in our midst senators who have the discipline of being once in the military, like Senator Biazon, Senator Honasan, Senator Lacson, and Senator Pangilinan, in a way, we will certainly see to it that the Department of National Defense and each branch of the Armed Forces of the Philippines will set aside funds and put good officers who will see to it that these integrees or these reserve officers wanting to join from their civilian service, given that attention of professionalism and quick response can be attracted to come back every year and get promoted with all these conditional training not only as captains of industry but even as captains of armed forces units if and when there is a national emergency that requires them to defend their country and their society.

Senator Honasan. I would like to thank the gentleman for allowing me to intervene.

Senator Magsaysay. I would like to thank the gentleman from Sorsogon and the Bicol region, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, I would like to thank Senator Honasan for giving us his expertise on the subject.

Mr. President, the point which I would like to be clarified is, if we take this option, have there been estimates or calculations as to who will take this optional ROTC? Have there been some calculations?

Senator Magsaysay. There are some surveys that show that if there are alternatives—because these are actually alternatives of citizenship and discipline—other than ROTC, only about five percent will be drawn to the ROTC program as they observe and look at this now. Meaning, not too many of the young people in college will be drawn to the program but instead elect the other two alternatives.

Senator Arroyo. If that is the case, Mr. President, what happens? I mean, the program will fail because we will not produce enough ROTC cadets.

Senator Magsaysay. This is precisely why we are trying to engender into this bill that there will be options of taking it during the four semesters or taking it during summer, full time, being given some allowance and even some uniform allowance, and being given professional military training for 40, 45 days during summer, full time, eight hours.

Senator Arroyo. Has the costing of this been already calculated? This would require expenses. Supposing we pass the law and then it cannot be implemented because the incentives so provided in the proposed law cannot be carried out because we have not appropriated monies for the purpose?

Senator Magsaysay. Yes, the costing is being included in this program. Of course, it has to be funded by the Department of National Defense. We are looking at basically giving them a meal allowance, a subsistence allowance of P60 a day for 45 days.

Senator Arroyo. Well, on the estimates of the sponsor, how much a year would be involved here?

Senator Magsaysay. I have here a costing for 40 days, P7,475 per cadet for the summer.

Senator Arroyo. So how many cadets will take the course?

Senator Magsaysay. Yes, a battalion of about 600 cadets will be about P4.4 million. We are looking at...

Senator Arroyo. No, I am looking at how many do we expect will take this course.

Senator Magsaysay. About P370 million for 100,000 cadets. But as I mentioned, Mr. President, when there was a survey made, only about five per 100. So if we are looking at five percent of 400,000 to 500,000, only about at most 25,000 a year will take ROTC.

Senator Arroyo. How many, Mr. President?

Senator Magsaysay. Twenty five thousand because there are now three options.

Senator Arroyo. How much is that per cadet?

Senator Magsaysay. Twenty five thousand times P7,500, that is about P175 million a year for 25,000 cadets. This includes the individual equipment, P2,700, which can be reduced; then the physical examination, P872, also can be reduced; health insurance, P200; training administrative support, P1,200; meal allowance for 40 days at P60, P2,400.

So this is the present system as it is now budgeted by the armed forces. But as I look at this now, the individual equipment and also the uniform—P2,783—may be reduced by going into bare uniform like a white T-shirt and fatigue pants, and even instead of boots, maybe some heavy-duty rubber shoes.

This can be configured based on what budget can be afforded by the military and by the administration, Mr. President.

Senator Arroyo. Does the gentleman mean we will get this from the budget of the Department of National Defense?

Senator Magsaysay. It has to come from the budget of the Department of National Defense because this is its role.

Senator Arroyo. What did our resource speakers yesterday...the secretary of National Defense and the Chief of Staff...

Senator Magsaysay. They are aware of their obligation. We are looking at roughly about P175 million but when reduced, because like this physical exam of P870, this can be given a much lower figure if it is just a basic exam, like what the insurance companies are giving. It can go down to even P200.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, I cannot imagine this program will cost us only P175 million. That is...

Senator Magsaysay. Mr. President, actually, under our reserve law, Republic Act No. 7077, Section 42, there is a provision on funds which is existing. This is for maintenance and operations of school ROTC units which says: "The funds for the establishment, maintenance and operations of ROTC units shall be provided for in the regular annual appropriation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Such appropriation shall provide for the full funding support for advanced ROTC only." This P175 million is for the basic per year, based on 25,000 warm bodies.

Senator Arroyo. Mr. President, perhaps we can go over this one more time in the period of amendments because this is a little more complicated than I expected.

Senator Magsaysay. We understand, Mr. President. We appreciate the point of the gentleman from Makati. Senator Angara earlier, during the first period of debates, also made a reservation that he be given a week or so to put some improvements on this existing committee report.

Senator Arroyo. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Senator Magsaysay. Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Legarda Leviste. We thank the distinguished cosponsor, Sen. "Jun" Magsaysay, Mr. President.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF S. NO. 1824

I move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 1824

under Committee Report No. 3. Some of our colleagues still wish to interpellate perhaps at the next session, and I thank Senator Magsaysay once again.

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

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President.

The President. The Minority Leader is recognized.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY OF SENATOR PIMENTEL (On the Prayer of Senator De Castro)

Senator Pimentel. May I just raise a parliamentary inquiry. I was listening to the prayer said by Sen. Noli De Castro and he spoke of God sending a text message to people. I wonder if that was given as a joke or was he serious about it, Mr. President. There was no qualification in the text of the prayer about God sending text messages to some people. I wonder if Senator De Castro would care to elaborate on that. If he cannot elaborate on it, I will move to strike out that prayer as an act of heresy.

The President. Sen. Noli De Castro may reply, if he so wishes.

Senator De Castro. Yes, Mr. President. We are just retrieving the text message.

It is not a joke. It is in English. We just translated it into Filipino. "God made a promise that you won't have to face life alone for when you grow weak in your struggles, His strength will prevail and not your own. Take care."

Senator Pimentel. That came from God himself, Mr. President? Is that what the gentleman is saying?

Senator De Castro. We took it as a message from God, and God sends His message in various ways, Mr. President. It is not a joke. I cannot make a joke of the prayer.

Senator Pimentel. Yes. But the gentleman mentioned about a text message. The impression that I got listening to the gentleman's prayer was God sent a message through a cellphone by way of text statements. That is how it struck me, Mr. President.

Senator Legarda Leviste. May I just inquire of the Minority Leader. Is the Minority Leader complaining that God has not communicated with the Minority?

Senator Pimentel. I do not know if God ever had a cellphone from Mawanay, Mr. President.