

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1999

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[Silence]

The ayes have it; Senate Bill No. 1404 is approved on Second Reading.

Senator Pimentel. Mr. President.

The President. Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. is recognized.

Senator Pimentel. May I register a vote of *no* against this bill, Mr. President.

Senator Drilon. Will the Secretary indicate the negative vote of Senator Pimentel?

Senator Roco. Mr. President.

The President. Sen. Raul S. Roco is recognized.

Senator Roco. Mr. President, may I register an *abstention*.

The President. Is there any other *abstention* or *no* vote?

[Silence]

The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, may we now move to the next Order of Business.

BILL ON SECOND READING
S. No. 1545--The Philippine Micronutrient
Fortification Act of 1999
(Continuation)

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, I move that we resume consideration of Senate Bill No. 1545 as reported out under Committee Report No. 37.

The President. Is there any objection? [Silence] There being none, resumption of consideration of Senate Bill No. 1545 is now in order.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, we are in the period of interpellations. May I ask the Chair to recognize Sen. Juan M. Flavier, the principal sponsor; and to interpellate the sponsor, we ask the Chair to recognize Sen. Ramon B. Revilla.

The President. Senators Flavier and Revilla are recognized.

Senator Revilla. Thank you, Mr. President.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the distinguished sponsor of this measure for his noble piece of health legislation that seeks to improve the nutritional status of the Filipino people by proposing proactive strategy in the battle against malnutrition in the country.

I would like to articulate, Mr. President, that I am in full support of any legislative endeavor that seeks to uplift the health condition of our ailing society.

As such, the questions that I will raise in this interpellation will be clarificatory in nature.

With that, will the distinguished sponsor yield for some clarificatory questions, Mr. President?

Senator Flavier. Marami pong salamat. Nakahanda po akong tumugon sa mga itatanong ng magiting na Senador mula sa Cavite.

Senator Revilla. Maraming salamat po.

G. Pangulo, ang unang tanong ko po ay ang tungkol sa status ng implementasyon of the existing Salt Iodization Law wherein the Department of Health was given the primary responsibility of implementing the provisions of the Salt Iodization Law.

Ang tanong ko, G. Pangulo, ay ito: May we know what is the status report of the DOH on the Salt Iodization Law in terms of

the volume of salt iodized per year; the cost of iodized salt as compared to salt which are not iodized; and the level of iodine improvement among children in the Philippines as the result of iodizing salt in the country?

Senator Flavio. G. Pangulo, maganda pong punto iyan. Ikinalulungkot ko pong sabihin sa inyo na hindi naging maganda ang resulta ng implementasyon ng batas na iyon. Ayon po sa huling pagsusuring ginawa ng Department of Health, ang umiiral na level ng iodization sa Pilipinas ay mula 10% hanggang 15% lamang ng asing ating ibinebenta sa mga palengke. Lubos na nababahala sa bagay na ito ang DOH dahil ang ibig sabihin nito ay kailangang pag-ibayuhin pa ang implementasyon ng batas na ito.

Ang malaki pong problema natin, karamihan ng asin sa Pilipinas ay gawa ng maliliit na asinan. Kailangan nating magkaroon ng health education upang iyan ay ma-implement nang mahusay. Ayon sa huling sinabi ng DOH, ngayong taon ay pag-iibayuhin nila ang kampanya.

Senator Revilla. Marami pong salamat sa inyong kasagutan.

G. Pangulo, narinig ko po sa radyo na may isinasagawang immunization at nutrition feeding ang Department of Health sa kanilang mga patak centers at health centers sa buong bansa minsan sa isang taon. Inaanyayahan ang mga ina o magulang na dalhin ang kanilang mga anak sa health centers para mabakunahan o mapatakan ng vitamin shots o injections ang mga bata.

The distinguished Senator is a medical doctor. Ito po kayang pamamaraan ng intervention is cost-effective in curtailing nutrition deficiency in the country? Do we need to fortify rice,

sugar, flour and cooking oil when the existing method being applied by the Department of Health is already effected?

Senator Flavier. Ang intindi ko po, ang inyong tanong ay nahahati sa dalawang parte. Una, itinatanong ninyo iyong pagkakaiba nito sa tinatawag na immunization.

Ito pong immunization at fortification ay pareho. These are both preventive ventures. Ang pagkakaiba po, iyong immunization ay sa bakuna. Binibigyan ng gamot ang mga bata upang may panlaban sa sakit. Doon po naman sa fortification, dinadagdagan ng sangkap o micronutrient ang pagkain para maging malakas ang kanilang katawan at maiwasan ang sakit dahil sa kakulangan ng micronutrient sa pagkain.

Ang pangalawang bahagi ng tanong ng Kgg. na Senador, kung ito ay aking nauunawaan, ay bakit dinadagdagan pa ng micronutrient o fortification ang bigas o rice, sugar, oil at wheat? Ito po ay ginagawa natin dahil sa iyan po ang pinakapopular na staple food na kinakain ng mga Filipino. Kaya po iyan ang napili natin nang sa gayon ay mas malawak ang maging epekto sa ating mga kababayan, G. Pangulo.

Senator Revilla. Maraming salamat po. Hindi po kaya mas mahal kung, halimbawa, ang kakainin ng mga bata o ng ating mga mamamayan ay itong fortified food katulad ng bigas, wheat, at asukal kaysa roon sa bakuna o bitaminang ibinibigay sa kanila sa pamamagitan ng pagkain ng mga supplemental food na iyan? Mas mahal kaya ang fortified food kaysa ryan sa mga bitaminang ibinibigay natin?

Senator Flavier. Maganda pong tanong iyan. Ang ibig po siguro ninyong itanong ay ang pagkakaiba ng tinatawag nating

supplementation versus fortification. Tama po iyong sinabi ninyo na mas epektibo sana iyong supplementation dahil sa direktamenteng ibibigay natin iyong vitamin A at saka iyong iron. Ang problema lamang po ay ang halaga.

Ito pong tinatawag nating supplementation ay apat na beses ang kamahalan. In other words, kung ang sa supplementation ay P4.00, ang sa fortification po ay P1.00 lamang. Kaya po iyon ang ating isinasagawa, mas mura at, wika nga, mas focused ang ating isinasagawa, G. Pangulo.

Senator Revilla. Gaano po karami ang rice miller, hard wheat flour miller, refined sugar refiner, cooking oil refiner, at food importers all over the country?

Senator Flavier. Sa pagkakaalam ko po, iyong mga rice miller ay napakarami. Sa buong bansa ay mayroon tayong 15,000, more or less, na rice millers. Kaya mas mahirap ang pagpo-fortify ng bigas o rice dahil gagawin natin iyan sa level ng mga rice miller. Iyon po namang sa sugar refineries, ang nakatalang bilang sa buong Pilipinas ay 15; ang flour millers, 13; at ang manufacturers ng cooking oil, 13.

Senator Revilla. Maraming salamat po. G. Pangulo. Nagtataka po ako kung bakit itong mais ay hindi naisama sa gagawing fortification of food, gayong ang mais ay basic staple food sa Kabisayaan. Noong pumunta ako sa Bisaya, ang ipinakain sa akin roon ay iyong bigas na hinaluan ng mais. Ayon sa kanila, ito raw mais ay magaling sa katawan ng tao dahil masustansiya. Bakit hindi po naisama ito sa mga ipo-fortify?

Senator Flavier. Noong naghi-hearing kami ay mas higit pa

riyan ang sinabi sa akin. Bakit daw iyong mais or corn na kinakain ni Pilita Corales, ni Flash Elorde at ng ating Senate President ay hindi idinagdag? Ang simpleng sagot ko po ay ito: Ang mais po ay mayroon nang vitamin A. Kaya po hindi na natin isinali ang mais---lalo na iyong yellow corn---ay dahil mayaman na ito sa vitamin A.

Senator Revilla. Ganoon po ba iyon? Maraming salamat po sa inyong pagpapaliwanag.

Gusto ko pong malaman itong definition ng biosynthesis. Ano po ang ibig sabihin nito?

Senator Flavier. Iyan po ay scientific term na ang ibig sabihin ay iyong paggawa ng sustansiya. Ito ay isinasagawa ng mga organismo sa pamamagitan ng pagbiyak o pagsasagawa ng sustansiya.

Ang ibig pong sabihin niyan, halimbawa, iyong ating pagkain o kinain, kung minsan, iyan ay binibiyak ng ating digestive system. Ang lalabas ay sustansiya. Iyon ang tinatawag na "biosynthesis." Ang ibig sabihin ng "bio" ay "living." Kaya ang nagbibiyak niyan ay living things. Ang ibig sabihin naman ng "synthesis" ay "paggawa," either by breaking or by building. Sa simpleng Tagalog ng mga Kabitenyo ko ibinibigay ang definition o kahulugan ng "biosynthesis."

Senator Revilla. G. Pangulo, halimbawang ang isang businessman ay nag-import ng 150 tons of rice sa ibang bansa, ngunit pagdating dito sa Maynila ay hindi pala fortified, ano ang mangyayari sa importasyong ito? Papapasukin pa ba ito sa ating market o hindi na? Ipababalik ba natin ang bigas sa bansang pinanggalingan nito?

Senator Flavier. Iyong unang tanong ng Ginoo tungkol sa level of fortification ng asin ang isa sa mga problemang kinakaharap natin dahil kulang tayo ng asin. Karamihan niyan ay ginagawa sa maliliit na asinan at hindi pa napo-fortify ng iodine. Iyong imported ay ganoon din, hindi pa fortified. Kaya marami pang asin sa atin na walang iodine.

Ang sagot ko sa katanungan ninyo ay ito: Iyong rice o bigas na lalagyan natin ng iron ay kailangang fortified na pag dumating dito sa atin at nang sa gayon ay hindi na tayo magkaroon pa ng problema.

Senator Revilla. Paano po kung hindi pa fortified, ipababalik ba natin iyon? Kung galing iyon sa Thailand, ipababalik ba natin iyong bigas sa Thailand?

Senator Flavier. Magaling na punto iyan. In practice, hindi natin dapat tanggapin iyan dahil may batas na tayo rito. Kaya natin binigyan ng limang taong palugit ay para magkaroon ng sapat na panahon na mapagsabihan ang ating mga importer at gayundin ang mga exporter tungkol sa requirement na ito.

But there is another system, and that is, kung magkakaroon ng agreement between the importer and the exporter, the premixing can also be done locally. Pero kailangang iyon ay maliwanag para hindi makalusot ang unfortified rice.

Senator Revilla. Sa madaling sabi, hindi po puwedeng dalhin sa palengke ang bigas na iyon hanggang hindi pa fortified?

Senator Flavier. Opo, iyon ang intensiyon ng ating micronutrient fortification program.

Senator Revilla. Salamat po. G. Pangulo. Sa Section 4,

paragraph 2, ay nabanggit iyong mga salitang "voluntary fortification" at "mandatory fortification." Ano po ba ang ibig sabihin ng "voluntary fortification" at "mandatory fortification"?

Senator Flavio. Dalawang klase po iyon. Noong nandoon pa ako sa Department of Health, mayroon kaming inilunsad na programa tungkol sa fortification. Iyon ang tinatawag nating "Sangkap-Halo Pinoy Program." Sa tulong ng marami, kasama na ang anak ng Ginoo, na si Lani Mercado, at gayundin ang inyong apo, inilunsad namin ang "Sangkap Pinoy Program." Kasama rin namin si Senador Jaworski na nag-promote ng micronutrient. Mayroon kaming eksena na kung saan ay isinu-shoot niya ako sa ring ng basketball court. Kaya naging matagumpay ang aming programang iyon.

Doon sa "voluntary" program naman, kusang-loob na naglalagay ng micronutrients iyong noodle factories, iyong mga gumagawa ng toyo, iyong mga gumagawa ng patis, iyong mga nagtitinda ng gatas. Sila na mismo ang naglalagay ng micronutrients. Kaya ang tawag diyan ay "voluntary."

May bagong pakulo ngayon na kapag naglagay sila ng micronutrients sa ano mang pagkain, lalagyan sila ng DOH ng *Sangkap Pinoy* seal, at iyon ay matagumpay na ginagawa. Kaya lamang, ito ay voluntary. Ang karaniwang nilalagyan nila ng micronutrients ay mga pagkaing pagkakakitaan. So it is the business dimension that is very prominent. Kaya po iyon ang voluntary.

Doon po sa mandatory ay pinili natin iyong tinatawag na "staple" o iyong pagkaing talagang inuubos ng mga Pilipino. Kasama ryan ang bigas, ang asukal, ang wheat na ginagawang

tinapay at saka mantika o cooking oil. Ayon sa pag-aaral, ang mga iyan ang talagang kinakain ng mga Pilipino, lalo na iyong mahihirap. Kaya gagawin nating mandatory iyan na kung saan ay nakasaad sa batas na kailangang lagyan nila ng micronutrient ang mga pagkaing iyan. Iyan po ang pagkakaiba ng tinatawag na "voluntary" at "mandatory" under our program of micronutrient."

Senator Revilla. Maraming salamat po.

Mayroon pong nagsasabi na ang paggamit ng food fortification ay isa sa mga dahilan for not allowing foreign goods to be sold in the Philippine market. Ito raw ay lumalabas na barrier to entry and barrier to trade competition. Ano po ang masasabi ninyo rian? Hindi po. Kaya we will be violating our commitment sa WTO at sa GATT?

Senator Flavier. Maganda pong pag-usapan ang puntong iyan. Mabuti na lamang at tinuruan ako ni Sen. Johnny Ponce Enrile tungkol sa tinatawag na "countervailing duty" dahil pinag-aralan namin iyan. Kaya po kahit na hindi ko naiintindihan iyan ay babanggitin ko para magulat kayo ng konti.

Hindi naman siguro masasabing paglabag ito dahil ayon sa aking pagka-unawa, magiging paglabag lamang iyan kung iba ang trato sa mga iniimbak dito sa atin. Pero dahil ang gagawin nating trato ay parehas, mapa-import man iyan o mapasarito, pareho rin ang gagawin nating requirement. Kaya hindi naman po siguro ito paglabag sa WTO.

Senator Revilla. Walang violation?

Senator Flavier. Ang akin pong propesor, si Senador Enrile, is nodding his head. Ang ibig sabihin, tama iyong aking sagot.

Senator Revilla. Magkano po kaya ang magiging halaga ng mga makina o equipment at itong technology na magpo-fortify ng rice, hard wheat, refined sugar at cooking oil?

Senator Flavier. Hindi ko po alam ang eksaktong halaga pero mayroon akong idea o estimate. Pero bago ko sagutin iyan, gusto ko lamang bigyan ng diin na ang teknolohiya, sa kabutihang-palad, ay simple. Halimbawa, iyong sa bigas at sa asukal, ang teknolohiyang gagawin ay paghahalo lamang. In other words, ihahalo lamang iyong tinatawag na "premix." Kukuha tayo ng kaunting bigas o rice, lalagyan na ng iron, iyon ngayon ang ihahalo. Iyon pong sa asukal ay ganoon din.

Iyon naman pong sa oil at sa wheat ay direktang ilalagay, at ginagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng tinatawag na "spraying" o direkta doon sa produkto. Iyong makinaryang panghalo ang kailangan natin. Hindi naman po mahal ito. Ang intindi ko iyong sa asukal, dahil maramihan o in bulk ang gagawin, iyong mixer niyan ay aabot din ng isang milyong piso. Pero one-time expense lamang iyan na puwede nang i-factor sa ating cost of the fortification.

Senator Revilla. Saan po manggagaling iyong nutrient or chemical na ihahalo rian?

Senator Flavier. Iyan po ay iniimbak natin at ang iba niyan ay nagagawa na rito sa Pilipinas.

Senator Revilla. Ano pong chemical iyan?

Senator Flavier. Ang unang ilalagay natin ay iyong iron. Ito po ay para doon sa may anemia o malabnaw ang dugo. Iyong namumutla. Iyan po iyong iron. Doon po sa baryo, ang tawag diyan ay "pagkaing riles ng tren" dahil sa iron. Tama po iyon, pero hindi iyong riles ang kinakain diyan.

Ang pangalawa po ay iyong vitamin A. Ito rin po ay nabibiling sangkap na ihahalo natin.

Senator Revilla. G. Pangulo, naniniwala po ba ang magiting na ginoo na pag naipasa natin ito bilang batas, ang makapagsu-supply o makapagbebenta ng mga makinang magpo-fortify ng bigas, wheat flour, sugar at cooking oil ay lalakas ang negosyo?

Senator Flavio. Hindi ko po alam kung iyon ay mangyayari dito sa staple food, sapagkat lagyan man natin o hindi ang mga ito ay kakainin at bibilhin din ng mga tao. Pero ang alam ko po, halimbawa, iyong mga gumagawa ng noodles na naglagay niyan ay tumaas ang kanilang benta. Ang hamon ko nga po roon sa mga nagtitinda ng margarine, lalo na sa kumpanya ng Star Margarine na isa sa unang naglagay ng vitamin A, "Basta maglagay kayo ng vitamin A at ipo-promote ko nang walang bayad ang inyong mga produkto. Mag-a-appear ako sa telebisyon at sasabihin ko na pag kumain sila ng Star Margarine na may vitamin A ay lalaki sila."

Kaya naniwala silang lahat sa akin dahil sa sinabi kong iyon. Kaya po tumaas ang benta nila. Ang problema nga po, kagaya ng noodles--iyan ay popular na popular--ang karamihan ng bumibili niyan ay iyong mga maykaya. Kaya po ilalagay natin ito sa staple food dahil ang mahihirap ay kumakain din ng bigas at asukal. Pero hindi ako siguradong tataas ang kanilang benta kung ilalagay natin ito sa mga staple food.

Senator Revilla. Ito pong mga makina at technology na gagamitin natin sa fortification ng mga produktong ito, ilan kayang importer o supplier nito mayroon tayo dito sa Filipinas?

Senator Flavio. Hindi ko po alam kung ilang suppliers

mayroon tayo, pero ang alam ko, kaya malakas ang loob ko, tinutulongan tayo ng Department of Science and Technology sa paggawa ng mga makina. Napakasimple po. Ang prinsipyo nito ay ang paghahalo lamang. At itong naimbento nilang mga makinarya ay ipinamumudmod at itinuturo nila nang walang royalty. Kaya ang mga makinang iyan ay magagawa natin nang mura, bukod pa sa maaari tayong gumawa ng kani-kaniyang disenyo. Hindi kailangan ang mga makinayang ini-import mula sa ibang bansa dahil napakamahal ng mga iyon.

Senator Revilla. Dito na lamang po gagawin ang mga makinang iyan.

Senator Flavier. Opo, at puwede silang gumawa ng kani-kanilang sariling makina. At ang magandang balita, G. Fangulo, ang ilan sa mga kumpanya, kagaya ng Victorias Sugar Milling, ay talagang naghahalo ng vitamin A sa asukal, at iyon namang San Pablo Cooking Oil Company ay naghahalo na rin sa kanilang mantika o cooking oil.

Senator Revilla. Ano po ang diperensiya noong fortified rice against unfortified rice? Gaano po kalaki ang agwat niyon sa halaga?

Senator Flavier. Maganda pong tanong iyan. May mga pag-aaral na ginawa na tataas ng piso ang bawat isang kilo ng bigas. Kaya kung ang isang kilo ng bigas ay kakainin ng sampung tao, tataas ito ng sampung sentimo per serving.

I will "overanswer" the gentleman a little because he has a good point about cost. Ang bawat piraso ng pandesal ay tataas ng isang pera. Kaya po may cost factor. Pero ito ay kayang-kaya naman. Ang totoo po, iyong ibang kompanya ay naglalagay na ng

fortification kahit hindi natin iutos. Kaya lamang, ang gusto kong maasikaso natin ay iyong staple food para mas marami ang mabenepisyuhan nito.

Senator Revilla. Sa madaling sabi, G. Pangulo, ang pagtaas po ng bigas ay very negligible, maliit lamang.

Senator Flavier. Opo.

Senator Revilla. Sa madaling sabi, kayang-kaya ng ating mamamayan ang halaga ng bigas na bibilhin nila. Fortified rice po iyan.

Senator Flavier. Opo. Ito ay amin nang naeksperimento sa Nueva Ecija noon, pati na ang paghahalo at ang pagtaas ng halaga ng produkto. Kapag iyan ay naisagawa na, bababa nang bababa iyan.

Senator Revilla. Sa Section 6, paragraph (b), ay nakalagay na may three-year transition period for wheat, flour, refined sugar, and cooking oil. Ang rice millers naman ay may five-year transition period. Bakit hindi po pareho? Ano ang dahilan at mahaba ang transition period para sa rice millers?

Senator Flavier. G. Pangulo, pinahahanga ako ng magiting na Senador, dahil talagang pinag-aralan niya itong ating panukala. Sapagkat napansin niya na tatlong taon lamang ang palugit na ibinibigay natin para sa sugar, wheat at saka cooking oil millers upang maturuan ang ating mga kababayan. Mas madali itong isagawa dahil ang bilang ng sugar millers o refineries sa ating bansa ay 15 lamang; ang wheat millers, 13 lamang; at ang cooking oil millers, 13 lamang. Within three years, naniniwala tayo na maisasagawa ito.

Ang problema po, G. Pangulo, ay 15,000 ang ating mga rice miller, kaya kakailanganin ang mas mahabang panahon upang sila ay maturuan ng paggawa ng fortified rice. Limang taon ang ginawa nating palugit.

Senator Revilla. Sa pag-iimbak ng ating fortified rice, cooking oil at sugar, gaano katagal bago mabulok ang mga iyan?

Senator Flavier. The rule of thumb is between six months to one year.

Senator Revilla. Hindi po mabubulok?

Senator Flavier. Hindi mabubulok. Ang nagiging problema, kung minsan, kung masyadong matagal ay nawawala ang 30 porsiyento ng fortification. Halimbawa, nilagyan natin ng vitamin A ang mantika. Kapag lumipas ang panahon ay nawawala ang 30 porsiyento ng fortification. Subalit ito ay hindi problema dahil ang kailangan ng tao ay halos mababa pa sa kalahati ng vitamin A na inilalagay natin. Maalis man ang 30 porsiyento ng fortification, mayroon pang 70 porsiyentong natitira. Ito naman ay lumalampas ng six months up to one year. Ang pagkakaalam ko po, iyong ginagawang mga pagkain, hindi pa man lumalampas sa panahon, ay nakakain na ng mga tao, lalo na ng mga mahihirap.

Senator Revilla. Maraming salamat po sa inyong paliwanag.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR REVILLA
(That He Be Made Coauthor of S. No. 1545)

Mr. President, I would like to manifest my earnest desire to be made a coauthor of this very noble measure and that is Senate Bill No. 1545. Hanggang dito na lamang po ang aking pagtatanong sa magiting na Senador.

Maraming salamat po.

Senator Flavier. Marami pong salamat. Karangalan ko pong maidagdag ang pangalan ng magiting na Senador sa mga isponsor ng panukalang-batas na ito at sa mga napakagaganda ninyong katanungan.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President.

The President. The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, may I ask the Chair to recognize Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago..

The President. Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago is recognized.

Senator Santiago. Thank you.

Mr. President, will the distinguished gentleman yield the Floor for interpellation, please?

Senator Flavier. With pleasure and trepidation, Mr. President, to the lady Senator from Iloilo.

Senator Santiago. Thank you.

Mr. President, my questions will consist of clusters and for the distinguished sponsor's convenience, I would like to respectfully submit this procedure: After the end of the cluster of questions and sentences, I shall say "That is the question," and the distinguished sponsor could then proceed at his leisure to answer the question.

This is the first question: Section 2 provides that there is a "demonstrated need to increase the intake of an essential nutrient by one or more population groups."

Section 3, paragraph (b), also mentions a "specific at-risk group."

To whom do these provisions refer? The bill does not

mention any special grouping with nutritional deficiency problems which requires food fortification. Is it safe to assume that this refers to Filipinos as a collective group, or does it refer to certain sectors endemic with iron or vitamin A deficiency disorders which have yet to be identified? That is the question.

Senator Flavio. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I was afraid I would be asked about the constitutionality of vitamin A, but I am glad that it is a little bit more medical. [Laughter]

It is true that there are certain targeting statements. The whole thrust of the intent is really to benefit the population most at risk. I will give an example and I think, it will embody my reply.

For example, among the poor in the Philippines, the deficiency of vitamin A is up to 35% of preschoolers, and that is a big number. According to the World Health Organization, if an age group has a deficiency of about 15%, it is a danger point already.

In other words, in the Philippines, we have 35%, whereas the WHO says, "If you have 15%, you are at risk." Therefore, we will notice that these are the preschoolers. And the subsidiary situation is that some people are saying, "Let us just feed all of those who are in school." That is one way, but the real problem are those who are out of school.

The other way to answer that, Mr. President, is on the item on iron deficiency, and we find that among all ages. There is a 30% nationwide anemia, meaning, they lack iron, and if we break

this down, it will answer the question of the lady Senator regarding the targeting.

According to the data, they are children below 1-year-old-- that is before the age of 12 months. All the pregnant women and all the lactating mothers, 50% of them are anemic. And this is a very serious situation. Of the preschoolers, 25%; and those in school, 30%. So the targeting, which is the question of the good Senator, is based on those findings that we have, Mr. President.

Senator Santiago. Thank you, Mr. President. I am enlightened.

I shall proceed to question No. 2. Vitamin A is a fat-soluble nutrient. Is it not true that fat-soluble nutrients cannot be easily flushed from the body and excessive dosages can produce negative side effects?

The bill recommends that rice should be fortified with iron, while hard wheat, flour, refined sugar and cooking oil should be fortified with vitamin A. Why were these food products chosen? The bill mentions only iron and vitamin A. Why were iron and vitamin A chosen? Are these the only nutrients lacking from the Filipino diet? Should there not be a provision allowing the Department of Health enough flexibility to later designate other nutrients which may later prove to be deficient in the Filipino diet?

The food products mentioned in the bill, especially rice and cooking oil, are consumed in large amounts by Filipinos, whether intentionally or by simple lack of options. Should the bill not indicate what are the safe levels of iron and vitamin A that may be ingested per meal or per day? That is the question.

Senator Flavio. Yes, Mr. President. Those are excellent, medically based queries. And the answer is that, first of all, iron, vitamin A, and iodine deficiencies are by far the most rampant, and that is the reason why we included them.

But the lady Senator's question is very incisive in the sense that, are those the only ones? And the answer is no. We also have deficiency in thiamine which is vitamin B1, riboflavin which is a vitamin complex, and vitamin C. However, in comparison to iron and vitamin A, the situation is less serious and the deficiency less rampant, especially because in terms of the food that the Filipinos take, we have a fighting chance because most of our vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamin C.

The other part of the earlier question of the distinguished Senator is important. And the reason why these are the only ones we added--meaning vitamin A, iron, and iodine--is that these are already established by scientific data and studies. However, the recommendation of the distinguished Senator that the DOH be allowed the prerogative or the duty to recommend other micronutrients is well-taken. It is implicit that the decision is left to the Council which is a larger body which includes not only the DOH but also the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Agriculture through the Nutrition Council. They will be able to suggest other micronutrients which may be added to what we have here.

The lady Senator has also a subsidiary question regarding the toxicity. When I was taking the leadership in the vitamin A Program in the Philippines, that concern was raised. However, in

the nationwide program we undertook, we did not find a single case of toxicity. The reason is that the amount that we are putting is not enough to cause toxicity. But we made a provision so that, for example, if one eats two pieces of *pandesal*, one is able to meet the recommended dietary allowance, but the toxicity level is not part of the problem, Mr. President.

Senator Santiago. I thank the gentleman for that answer. It is very gratifying to hear a masterful discourse on these questions. So I shall proceed with the same amount of anticipation to question No. 3.

Section 6 provides that there should be mandatory fortification for rice, hard wheat, refined sugar, and cooking oil. Is this an exclusive listing? Does the bill intend all future food fortifications to be merely voluntary? I raise this question after noting that the bill, as presently crafted, does not allow the Department of Health to subsequently designate other food products which may require mandatory fortification. What is the impact of a voluntary fortification program? Would there be incentives for those who incur additional expenses just to comply with a voluntary program?

Senator Flavio. That is another very good question, Mr. President. Let me answer the second question first, and that is the matter of incentives. This was brought up during the hearing, but we decided not to provide the incentives. Because when we do so, it will complicate the whole procedure. So we decided not to put it because, as it is, there is already growing compliance of the fortification especially under the voluntary scheme.

For example, as late as last week, I inquired from the Department of Health Nutrition Service, and I was told that there were already 44 companies in the Philippines that have applied for voluntary fortification status entitling them to the "*Sangkap-Pinoy* Seal". I was told that the mere exhibition of the seal--I am sure that the good Senator has seen this on television when they say that this is a *Sangkap-Pinoy* certified product--increases the sale. So that is the incentive they get. But if the point of the lady Senator is the matter of tax incentive or the like, we did not provide for it.

Regarding the first point of the lady Senator which was also partly alluded to in her previous question, I would be very glad to have a specific amendment later that would mandate or give the DOH or the council the duty and the right to add any other micronutrient based on studies and current information as to its desirability.

Senator Santiago. I would like to thank the gentleman, Mr. President. I shall be delighted to offer the amendment at the proper time. In the meantime, I will proceed to question No. 4.

This refers to Section 6, paragraph (b), which requires manufacturers to undertake the fortification of food products. However, this section fails to mention how these manufacturers are going to fortify the food products.

Will these manufacturers be given government assistance in the transfer of technology, or do we expect them to shoulder the added expense of technology? And, will there be sanctions for those who do not comply with the fortification program? Those

are the questions.

Senator Flavio. Yes, Mr. President. As the distinguished Senator said in her opening statement, that is really a cluster of questions. Fortunately, point one, the process is fairly simple. For example, the whole idea is mixing, except for a distinction that in rice and in sugar, it is recommended that a certain amount be premixed first and then that small amount will be mixed with a bigger amount. But the idea is the same.

On the part of the wheat and on the part of cooking oil, it is a direct application of the fortificant. So it is fairly simple.

In terms of technology transfer, let me answer that by saying that according to the bill, the Department of Science and Technology, which has the mechanical processes already established, can share the technology without royalty and can even teach those interested how to fabricate the machines, if need be, and this procedure will be done through the DOST.

Let me add a little bit, Mr. President, by saying that the Department of Trade and Industry is also required to assist, to support affected manufacturers in upgrading the technologies by helping them obtain soft loans and official financial assistance for the procurement of technologies and machines, wherever this is called for, to comply with the provisions of the Act.

Finally, Mr. President, at the risk of overstating my answer, we are also mandating the Land Bank of the Philippines and Livelihood Corporation to assist and support the manufacturers in the implementation of this Act by the grant of loans or the securing of loans through preferential rates so

they can comply with the provisions of this law.

Those, to my recollection, are the elements. I think the distinguished Senator also asked about the penalties.

Mr. President, there are two types of penal provisions that are, more or less, provided for in Sections 10 and 11. Section 10 is on administrative sanctions which will include, depending on the severity of the wrongdoing, a range of fines, recall of the product or cancellation of registration of the product.

Meanwhile, the penal sanction will include imprisonment of one month for the first offense; three months for the second offense; and six months for the third and subsequent offenses.

Senator Santiago. Contrary to the fears expressed by the gentleman, I did not find any occasion of overanswering. In fact, I must confess that I found the entire discourse thoroughly fascinating. I shall limit myself to just one more question, however.

The bill mentions only the involvement of the Department of Health. Should the bill not also require the participation of other essential agencies, namely: The Department of Trade and Industry, to regulate and monitor the trading of the food products; the Department of Science and Technology, and the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center, for the transfer of technology involved in the fortification of food products; the National Nutrition Council to coordinate on nutrition; and the local food industries involved in the production; marketing and distribution of the food products? That is the question.

Senator Flavio. Yes, Mr. President, that is another very

good question. The intent of the bill is to include them especially in light of the lady Senator's points about technology, financing and all that. But I think it can bear improvement through an amendment so that a more specific line may be included. And if the good Senator will craft an amendment for us, we will be very delighted to accept that.

But the new element that I am hearing is the inclusion of the National Nutrition Council, an important umbrella organization in the Philippines, which can advise or recommend the inclusion of additional micronutrients. Also, during the hearings, the food industries were included. But in the bill itself, come to think of it, I do not think we mentioned them too much. I would be very glad to include them as part of the active agencies that will help us not only to monitor directly but also to implement this law.

If I may add one more, Mr. President, I think we were silent in terms of the inclusion of the local government units, and in light of the lady Senator's points, I feel that we should include them. So I would be very happy to accept an amendment in that spirit.

Senator Santiago. I thank the good gentleman for the kind invitation for me to submit the proper amendment, and I shall seek to comply at the proper stage.

Mr. President, with deep gratitude, I shall end this interpellation with a note that I find the good gentleman, Senator Flavies, to have been extraordinarily competent on what, after all, is a highly specific and narrowly technological bill. And I thank him for helping to enlighten the minds of this

Chamber.

Senator Flavier. Mr. President, I am glad the good lady Senator found my answers very good, but the reason for that is, the questions were very good.

The President. The Majority Leader is recognized.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, we still have in our list Senators Leviste, Jaworski, Honasan, and Magsaysay, who have manifested their intention and their desire to raise questions to the sponsor during the period of interpellations.

At this stage, may we ask the Chair to recognize Sen. Robert S. Jaworski.

The President. Senator Jaworski is recognized.

Senator Jaworski. Thank you, Mr. President.

Will the honorable Senator Flavier yield for a couple of clarificatory questions?

Senator Flavier. With pleasure, Mr. President. After all, Senator Jaworski was my partner during the implementation of the *Sangkap Pinoy* during our younger days when he was five years younger and I was 20 years younger. [Laughter]

Senator Jaworski. First of all, Mr. President, may we be enlightened on the current health status of our population? The second question is: Exactly what is the status of our micronutrient malnutrition?

Senator Flavier. Yes, that is an interesting and very pertinent question. At the risk of being repetitive, let me just do this by referring to the three major micronutrients.

The status in vitamin A is rather serious because, as I said

earlier, in response to Senator Santiago, the WHO bench mark for vitamin A is 15% level of deficiency. In the Philippines, the level of those below five years old is at 3.8 million children or 35% of preschoolers, meaning, twice the number. In terms of iron, the nationwide figure of iron deficiency anemia is at 30% of the whole population. So it is a very serious figure. In absolute figures, this would range from 22 million to about 25 million Filipinos. If we segmentize this, we will find that 50% of children below one year old, and lactating and pregnant women are anemic. Therefore, it is a very serious problem.

In the case of iodine deficiency, Mr. President, this is different depending on the areas in the country. The leading region with serious problems of iodine deficiency like goiter is, unfortunately, my own region, the region of the Cordilleras. So that is the current status of our micronutrient malnutrition problem in the Philippines today.

Senator Jaworski. Thank you, Mr. President. Explaining that, I have a general understanding. But what is the exact difference between nutrient and micronutrient?

Senator Flavier. That is a good medical question, Mr. President. Both of them are nutrients. But one kind of nutrient is very visible to the eye, for example, protein. That is meat. We can see it. That is why it is called macronutrient. When we talk about carbohydrates, that is rice. We can see it.

But when we talk about micronutrients, these are substances that are so small that these cannot be seen, and therefore are referred to as micronutrients. That was our first problem when we were trying to implement this in the DOH because we did not

have the translation of micronutrient. So we finally arrived at the phrase "*Sangkap Pinoy*" for micronutrient. And it refers to iron, iodine and vitamin A, Mr. President.

Senator Jaworski. I have noticed packages of junk food like chips, curls and *kropek* and all of them are seemingly fortified with certain vitamins. But my concern though is, do we have the present capability--the BFAD specifically--to analyze if these are indeed fortified? Or is it just another medium for promo and marketing without necessarily having those nutrients that are being specified? Do we have the capability to analyze them?

Senator Flavier. That is a very critical point, Mr. President. Let me complete that by saying that aside from the Bureau of Food and Drug, we also have the Department of Science and Technology which will help us provide laboratory studies. The point of the gentleman is important because the question ultimately is: Are they fortifying? If they are, what is our evidence that they are? And it boils down to testing.

As far as those two agencies are concerned, Mr. President,--let me be very candid--they will need additional personnel and additional capability so that at the end of the day, they can at least do what may be called "random sampling". So we can establish that the fortification is indeed being done properly and adequately.

Senator Jaworski. Mr. President, this is exactly my concern. Because obviously when products are supposed to be fortified, it then becomes a marketing advantage. And for the welfare of consumers, we have to see to it that indeed government

agencies not only implement but monitor what is happening out there.

On this note, Mr. President, although we have listed a good number of questions, they have been covered extensively by the other honorable senators. So I thank the sponsor.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Flavier. I also would like to thank the distinguished Senator and I would like to invite him to agree to be a coauthor of this particular bill, including Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Senator Drilon. Mr. President.

The President. The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF S. NO. 1545

Senator Drilon. There are still a number of our colleagues who, as I previously stated, wish to raise questions to the sponsor. I therefore move that we suspend consideration of Senate Bill No. 1545 under Committee Report No. 37.

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

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, today we distributed printed copies of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 443, together with the printed copy of the Visiting Forces Agreement. We intend to calendar for consideration and vote on this measure on Third Reading in tomorrow's session, May 27, 1999.

For purposes of enabling the Chamber to act on the Proposed Senate Resolution tomorrow, I will move at that time to suspend