

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 1999

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one minute, Mr. President...

The President. Is there any objection? [*Silence*] There being none, the session is suspended for one minute.

It was 12:30 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 12:39 p.m., the session was resumed.

The President. The session is resumed.

Senator Guingona. Mr. President, for lack of material time, I already manifested to the distinguished Majority Leader that I intended to terminate my interpellation this morning. However, because of several incidents that took up time, I have not finished. In order to give opportunities to others to interpellate, I would like to manifest that I am suspending my interpellation in favor of others, with the reservation however that after the other senators shall have finished their interpellation, this humble representation be allowed to resume, especially on that note of "activities" and "who is to approve?"

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, we take note of the manifestation of the Minority Leader. Of course, the matter of whether or not the sponsor will continuously yield to the interpellation of the Minority Leader is a matter for the sponsors to decide. The Minority Leader has manifested his intention to continue with his interpellation after the other senators have taken the Floor. That is a matter that we will leave to the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations to decide.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF P.S. RES. NO. 443

Mr. President, with that, I move that we suspend consideration of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 443.

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

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON S. NO. 1330/H. NO. 7063 (Imposition of Countervailing Duties)

Senator Drilon. Mr. President, a few more matters before we adjourn. May I move that the Chamber send its contingent to the Bicameral Conference Committee to discuss the disagreeing provisions on Senate Bill No. 1330 under Committee Report No. 11. This is the bill on countervailing measures.

May I nominate the members of the Senate panel as follows: As Chairman, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile; and as members: Sen. Gregorio B. Honasan, Sen. Robert Z. Barbers, Sen. Juan M. Flavies and Sen. Renato L. *Compañero* Cayetano.

We so move that these senators be sent as members of the Senate panel.

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

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF SENATOR DRILON
(Noncommitment of the Senate to Postpone the ARMM Elections)

Senator Drilon. With the permission of the Chair, we wish to take the Floor on a point of personal privilege.

Mr. President, today's issue of the *Philippine Star*, on page 14, carries an article regarding the holding of the ARMM elections. The news article reports what allegedly transpired during the LEDAC Task Force meeting last May 3, 1999. It reads in part:

Zamora (referring to the Executive Secretary) said the decision to postpone the ARMM elections anew was reached during the meeting of the Legislative/Executive Development Advisory Council Task Force which he heads on Monday night at Malacañang. The meeting was attended by congressmen for 14 provinces and 10 cities proposed to be included in the expanded ARMM as well as the congressmen from the four ARMM provinces. Senate Majority Leader Franklin Drilon and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, who chairs the Senate Committee on National Defense.

Mr. President, I would like to make it clear that we did not agree to any postponement. We did not commit the Chamber to postpone the ARMM elections. There was no agreement reached on this point. In fact, there were a number of questions raised by the members of the House of Representatives, who are from Mindanao, on policy and on the constitutional ground as to whether or not we should postpone the ARMM elections. We manifested for the record that we view this bill as a bill of local application and therefore should be first enacted by the House of Representatives before we even debate on the same in this Chamber. What we committed, as Majority Leader, was that we will calendar this bill for debate once it reaches us. But we never committed the Chamber. We never committed that the Chamber will approve the postponement of the ARMM elections. We want to place that on record to clarify matters, Mr. President.

The President. The point has been sufficiently clarified.

Senator J. Osmeña. Mr. President.

The President. Sen. John H.R. Osmeña is recognized.

Senator Osmeña (J). Mr. President, will the distinguished Majority Leader yield for just one question?