

Title: Camilo L. Sabio vs. Hon. Alejandro E. Sebastian and Atty. Francisco M. Gonzales

Facts:

Camilo L. Sabio filed an administrative complaint against Judge Alejandro E. Sebastian and Atty. Francisco M. Gonzales, primarily addressing Judge Sebastian's issuance of a preliminary mandatory injunction ex parte in favor of Cuison Lumber Company. The lumber company sought access to a logging road which traversed a property owned by Romualdo Bhady and his wife, who were described as "poor and illiterate farmers." The Bhady couple had previously barricaded this road claiming ownership, which disrupted Cuison's logging operations, threatening starvation to their workers in the forests.

Judge Sebastian issued the injunction without notifying the Bhady family, citing the necessity to prevent irreparable injury to the company and its workers. When the Bhady family and Camilo L. Sabio failed to comply with the injunction, they were cited for contempt and sentenced. Sabio argued that the judge's actions showed bias toward property rights over individual rights.

Procedural Posture:

1. Sabio filed the administrative complaint with the Supreme Court alleging oppression by Judge Sebastian.
2. Judge Sebastian, in his defense, justified the ex parte issuance of the injunction due to the urgent circumstances and the potential harm to Cuison's operations and workers.
3. Sabio did not comment on the judge's answer but, on March 21, 1973, requested the dismissal of the administrative case, stating he no longer wished to pursue it.

Issues:

1. Whether Judge Sebastian exercised judicial power oppressively in issuing an ex parte preliminary mandatory injunction.
2. Whether the actions of respondent Judge and Atty. Gonzales exhibited partiality towards property rights over the rights of the economically underprivileged.

Court's Decision:

1. Exercise of Judicial Power:

The Court found Judge Sebastian's issuance of the ex parte preliminary mandatory injunction was within his discretionary judicial powers, especially given the context of preventing workers' starvation and irreparable harm to Cuison's logging operations. The Court noted that Sabio had procedural remedies available, such as moving to lift the

injunction or filing an appeal, which he did not utilize.

2. Partiality Allegation:

While acknowledging Sabio's commendable zeal in defending his clients, the Court concluded that the judge's actions did not necessarily exhibit undue partiality. Nevertheless, the Court emphasized the necessity for judiciary members to be mindful of the appearance of bias, particularly when adjudicating cases involving the economically disadvantaged.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court granted Sabio's request for dismissal of the case, recognizing the complaint stemmed from a sense of grievance and frustration rather than clear evidence of judicial misconduct.

Doctrine:

The doctrine reiterated here reaffirms the judiciary's discretion in issuing ex parte injunctions under exigent circumstances, provided that actions taken consider the balance of justice and the rights of all parties involved. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of judicial impartiality and vigilance against appearances of bias, particularly in protecting the economically underprivileged.

Class Notes:

1. Key Elements:

- ****Preliminary Mandatory Injunction****: A court order issued to compel a party to act. This can be issued ex parte (without notifying the other party) in urgent situations.
- ****Contempt of Court****: A finding against individuals who fail to comply with a court order.
- ****Procedural Remedies****: Options available to challenge judicial decisions, such as motions to lift injunctions, appeals, or habeas corpus petitions.
- ****Social Justice****: The principle that courts should consider broad equitable principles favoring the economically disadvantaged.

2. Relevant Legal Statutes/Provisions:

- ****Article II, Section 6 of the Revised Constitution****: "The State shall promote social justice to ensure the dignity, welfare, and security of all the people."

Historical Background:

The case occurred during a period of Philippine history marked by significant social reforms and a focus on social justice under the 1973 Constitution. The emphasis on equitable

property distribution and social services highlighted a constitutional commitment to uplifting the economically disadvantaged. The judiciary's role in balancing property rights and social equity was being actively scrutinized and shaped within this broader socio-political context.