

Title: Reyes vs. Trajano

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Facts:

- **Background:** The Bureau of Labor Relations authorized a certification election among employees of Tri-Union Industries Corporation on October 20, 1987. Two competing unions, Tri-Union Employees Union-Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture (TUEU-OLALIA) and Trade Union of the Philippines and Allied Services (TUPAS), contested the election.

- **Election Details:** 348 workers were initially deemed qualified; 240 participated, which included 141 members of the “Iglesia ni Kristo” (INK). The INK members’ ballots were challenged and segregated due to an agreement that excluded them from voting because “they are not members of any union and refused to participate in the previous certification elections.”

- **Results:** The final tally:

- TUPAS: 1

- TUEU-OLALIA: 95

- NO UNION: 1

- SPOILED: 1

- CHALLENGED: 141

- **Procedural Posture:**

1. **INK Response:** They filed a petition to cancel the election, arguing it was unfair and did not reflect the majority’s true sentiments.

2. **Med-Arbitr Decision:** Denied the petition, certified TUEU-OLALIA as the exclusive bargaining agent, and dismissed the legal personality of INK employees in the petition.

3. **Appeal to Bureau of Labor Relations:** Petitioners argued disenfranchisement and invalid election. Assistant Labor Secretary Cresenciano B. Trajano denied the appeal, citing lack of legal personality from non-union INK employees.

4. **Supreme Court Petition:** Petitioners sought certiorari to annul Trajano’s decision. The Solicitor General supported their position, while NLRC insisted on the necessity to ensure other employees’ right to representation.

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Issues:

1. **Whether INK employees have legal personality to protest the election results despite not being affiliated with the competing unions.**
2. **Whether exclusion of INK employees from voting was valid due to their religious beliefs and non-affiliation with labor organizations.**
3. **Entitlement of employees to abstain from union membership while maintaining their right to vote in union elections.**

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Court's Decision:

1. **Legal Personality to Protest:**
 - The Court held that INK employees have the legal personality to protest the election results as they are bona fide employees in the bargaining unit. Law and jurisprudence do not mandate union membership as a prerequisite for voting in certification elections.
2. **Exclusion Due to Religious Beliefs:**
 - The Court declared that citing religious beliefs to exclude employees from voting is both discriminatory and a denial of their statutory rights to self-organization. All employees, including INK members, have a right to determine union representation or not.
3. **Right to Abstain and Vote:**
 - The Court affirmed that the right to self-organization includes the liberty to join or abstain from any union. The ballots should allow choices like "NO UNION," recognizing the workers' right not to be affiliated yet have a say in representation.

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Doctrine:

- **Right to Self-Organization:** Includes freedom to join, form, or assist labor unions, and equally, the right to abstain from these activities.
- **Validity of Union Choices:** Certification ballots must accommodate options reflecting non-affiliation preferences (e.g., "NO UNION").

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Class Notes:

- **Key Concepts:**

1. **Self-organization:** Employees' right to join or abstain from unions.
2. **Certification Election Eligibility:** All employees, irrespective of union affiliation, can vote.
3. **Religious Freedom in Labor Law:** Religious beliefs cannot be grounds for disenfranchisement in union matters.

- **Statutory Provisions:**

- **Labor Code, Article 243:** Provides right to self-organization.
- **Article 248(a):** Employer unfair labor practices include interference with self-organization.
- **Article 249(a):** Similar provision for labor organizations.
- **Omnibus Rules Implementing Labor Code, Rule II, Section 1:** Reinforces right to self-organization for all employees except managerial positions.

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Historical Background:

This case reflects the broader context of labor rights expansion post-Martial Law in the Philippines, where employees' freedom to self-organize was robustly protected, including safeguards against any forms of discrimination based on religious beliefs or non-affiliation with unions. The ruling underscores the judiciary's commitment to uphold democratic principles within labor relations, especially concerning employees' fundamental rights.