

SAN MIGUEL BREWERY, INC., PETITIONER, VS. REGINO SOBREMESANA AND WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION COMMISSION, RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. L-18730. September 16, 1961

Ponente: REYES, J.B.L., J.

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REYES, J.B.L., J.:

The San Miguel Brewery, Inc. was made respondent in a claim for workmen's compensation filed by its truck driver, Regino Sobremesana, by complaint filed in June 23, 1959, with Regional Office No. 4 of the Department of Labor. The company answered, denying compensability of the injury, and averring prescription of the claim. On October 25, 1960, the hearing officer rendered a decision, finding that the claim was compensable on the ground that the illness (pulmonary tuberculosis) had been aggravated by the conditions of employment, and ordered the company to pay P3,093.48 for temporary total disability, plus P26.41 a week up to a maximum of P4,000, if the disease was not cured earlier.

Its motion for reconsideration having been denied, the company appealed to the Workmen's Compensation Commission, which affirmed the decision of the hearing officer.

The Company now resorts to this Court for a review by certiorari, alleging two grounds:

"1. The instant case was originally heard and decided by a hearing officer of Regional Office No. 4 of the Department of Labor, Manila, pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. 20-A granting exclusive and original jurisdiction to said office to try labor claims, including workmen's compensation claims; said Reorganization Plan was declared null and void by this Honorable Court in several cases and, consequently, said decision is null and void, hence, respondent Workmen's Compensation Commission had likewise no jurisdiction to decide the present claim on appeal under said Reorganization Plan No. 20-A.

2. The findings in the resolution of respondent Commission en banc (Annex "H") upon which the award for compensation is based, have absolutely no support in the evidence on record, or that such findings are unsupported by substantial or credible evidence."

We rule the petition to be without merit.

Petitioner argues incorrectly that our previous rulings (*Corominas vs. Labor Standards Commission*, 112 Phil., 551; 59 Off. Gaz., [43], and related cases decided June 20, 1961) hold null and void Reorganization Plan 20-A in so far as it vests the Regional Offices of the Department of Labor with original and exclusive jurisdiction to try and decide labor claims, including workmen's compensation claims. This Court never ruled that the Regional Offices have no authority to pass upon workmen's compensation claims under Plan 20-A; on the contrary, in our decisions in the case of *Miller vs. Mardo*, 112 Phil., 792; 59 Off. Gaz., [14] 2307, and related cases, we said:

"On the basis of the foregoing considerations, we hold and declare that Reorganization Plan No. 20-A, insofar as it confers judicial power to the Regional Offices over cases other than those falling under Workmen's

Compensation Law, is invalid and of no effect." (*Italics supplied*)

The reason for the ruling is that, as pointed out in the same cases, the consideration and adjudication of claims under the Workmen's Compensation Law was already being exercised by the Department of Labor's Compensation Commission even prior to its reorganization under Plan 20-A. In conferring initial power to hear and decide such claims upon the hearing officers of the Department's Regional Offices, section 25 of Plan 20-A was merely reallocating powers already possessed by the Department, and was in conformity with the authority granted by section 6 of Republic Act 997 as amended by Republic Act No. 1241. There was in the particular case no assumption of powers not previously vested in the Department, and, therefore, no transgression of the reorganizational authority and purposes of the enabling laws.

It is true that our subsequent decision in *Pastoral vs. Workmen's Compensation Commission*, G.R. No. L-12903, promulgated July 31, 1961, we held that the Commission had no power under the Reorganization Acts to issue writs of execution. But the holding was predicated on the well-known fact that prior to the Reorganization Acts, execution of awards by the Compensation Commission was a power conferred upon courts of record by the Workmen's Compensation Law (section 51), and the Jurisdiction of such courts could not be diminished under the guise of a reorganization of an executive department.

As to the merits of the award, we find it supported by adequate evidence, taking into account the proofs submitted and the presumption of compensability established by section 44 of the Compensation Law (No. 3428) as amended.

Wherefore, the petition for certiorari is dismissed for lack of merit.

Bengzon, C. J., Labrador, Concepcion, Barrera, Paredes, Dizon, De Leon, and Natividad, JJ., concur.

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