

FILIPRO INC. AND MOGENS ERIK HANSEN, PETITIONERS, VS. COURT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND PERFECTO GIANAN, RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. L-30827. August 18, 1972

Ponente: MAKASIAR, J.

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MAKASIAR, J.:

Petitioners seek a review of the decision dated March 24, 1969 and the order dated July 8, 1969 of the Court of Industrial Relations in Case No. 2128-V of said respondent Court entitled "Perfecto Gianan vs. Filipro (Philippines) and Erik Hansen, etc."

As stated in paragraph 3 of their petition, petitioners raised only one issue - whether the respondent Court of Industrial Relations has jurisdiction to order the reinstatement of a dismissed employee, with payment of back wages, in spite of the finding that his employer had not violated the Eight-Hour Labor Law nor committed any unfair labor practice, accentuated by the fact that the employee's complaint in the aforesaid Case No. 2128-V does not even allege the commission by the employer of any act constituting unfair labor practice.

On September 3, 1965, private respondent Perfecto Gianan alone, without being joined by the labor union of which he is a member, filed a complaint against herein petitioners docketed as Case No. 2128-V of the respondent Court of Industrial Relations for the recovery of compensation for overtime work as driver from February 5, 1952 to July 12, 1965, when he was dismissed, and salary from June 15 to July 15, 1965, and for reinstatement with back wages on the ground that his dismissal was without just and reasonable cause, despite the intervention of the labor union to which he belongs (Annex C, pp. 26-28, rec.). The complaint does not invoke any Collective-Bargaining agreement stipulation against such removal.

On September 14, 1965, herein petitioners filed their answer, denying among others the allegation that private respondent performed overtime work and averring that the dismissal was for cause, which vitiates his right to termination pay (Annex D, pp. 30-34, rec.).

On March 24, 1969, after due hearing, respondent Court of Industrial Relations rendered a decision dismissing petitioner's claim for overtime pay for insufficiency of evidence, but holding that private respondent was dismissed without cause and consequently directed herein petitioners to reinstate private respondent Perfecto Gianan "to his former or substantially equivalent position, with three years back wages counted from his dismissal * * *" and to pay said private respondent "his salary from June 15 to June 22, 1965, and from July 9 to July 11, 1965" (Annex A, pp. 12-24, rec.).

The pertinent findings of respondent Court of Industrial Relations is as follows:

"The second issue is whether or not petitioner was dismissed with just cause. The letter of dismissal (Exhibit "A") follows in full:

'12 July 1965

Mr. Perfecto Gianan

MAKATI OFFICE

Dear Mr. Gianan,

In connection with the stock shortage reported by Mr. A.C. Villanueva, after an audit on the truck stock of Salesman M. Dizon, subsequent investigation amply demonstrates that:

1. You sought to cover up the shortage in your truck stock by submitting a written spot inventory which, on its face, would preclude any discrepancy in the physical count of said stock.
2. You collected from dealer Bienvenido Padre the sum of P430.00, which amount was duly receipted for by you on behalf of Mr. M. Dizon.
3. In the face of all the above, you maintain that you do not know any person by the name of Bienvenido Padre; that you collected P430.00 from him on or about 21st March 1965, and that you lost part of that sum in a game of cards.

Your blanket denials pale in the light of the above findings. Moreover, you are aware that gambling is one of the serious infractions of existing rules and regulations. In view of the forgoing, and for loss of confidence in you, we have no alternative but to terminate your services with the Company effective immediately.

Yours very truly,

FILIPRO (Philippines) INC.

(S) P.L. Ascalon

(T) P.L. Ascalon

By Special Authority
PERFECTO GIANAN'

"The spot inventory referred to is Exhibit "2", a 'big cardboard with certain markings' (t.s.n., p. 69, Feb. 11, 1969), indicating a list of stocks made by petitioner. Now, did petitioner, by this exhibit, intent 'to cover up the shortage' of the stock in the truck?

"Considering (1) that the goods in the truck were under the responsibility of the truck salesman M. Dizon, who acknowledged from respondent company receipt of the goods, was given contingent funds and prepared accountable forms, and who was petitioner's superior (t.s.n., p. 40, Jan. 9, 1967); (2) that Exhibit "2" is not intended to be complete as it does not contain 'very big quantity of stocks' - 62 cases and 25 tins of condensed milk - worth over P2,000.00, which sales supervisor A.C. Villanueva could not miss (t.s.n., pp. 26-29, Jan. 16, 1967); (3) that Exhibit "2" as a re-called 'inventory' is not intended to be final and official, being merely on a piece of 'big cardboard' (t.s.n., p. 69, Feb. 11, 1966); (4) that Exhibit "2" was made under the following circumstances, as testified to by respondents' witness A.C. Villanueva. 'He (petitioner) is the driver-helper of the truck. He is responsible for lifting the cases and putting them in order for our inventory. That is why I asked him to do the spot inventory, so that it will be easy for me when I go down and count the stocks.' (t.s.n., p. 41, Jan. 9, 1967), thus showing the nature and extent of petitioner's responsibility and the reason for Exhibit "2". (Italics supplied.)

"The first charge in Exhibit "A" is consequently not a sufficient ground for petitioner's dismissal.

"The second charge is that petitioner gambled and lost P225.00 out of P430.00 he collected on behalf of Dizon from a dealer of respondent company, Bienvenido Padre, in Guinobatan, Albay.

"On this point, Sales Supervisor A.C. Villanueva testified on direct examination that Dizon had reported that

petitioner gambled; that his investigation in Sorsogon disclosed that petitioner had gambled and lost some money; that according to Dizon, the money collected from Padre was allowed to be kept on the truck but was found short of P100.00 the following day and so Dizon gave petitioner time to repay it (t.s.n., pp. 12-13, April 12, 1966).

"On cross-examination, however, Villanueva testified that in his investigation, the information that petitioner had gambled was relayed to him by a hotel boy; that he did not know the name of the bell boy whom he know only by sight; that he did not investigate any other person; that he did not ask the bell boy with whom petitioner had gambled or who were present or what game was played or on what date or when it was played; that he never came to know the actual amount lost or was he told by the bell boy; that he did not know whether the money lost was part of the collection; that he did not know exactly whether or not Dizon stated to him that part of the collection was lost; and that there was no way of knowing whether what was short was cash or stock (t.s.n., pp. 6-33, Jan. 9, 1967).

"Such evidence obviously defeats itself and it has no leg to stand on to warrant the dismissal of petitioner who vehemently denied the charge. Dizon, who was still a salesman of respondent company at the time of the hearing of the case (t.s.n., p. 24, April 12, 1966) and the alleged hotel bell boy could have given competent evidence on the charges, but respondents never took pains in presenting them on the witness stand.

"On the other hand, petitioner testified that after collecting the P430.00, he immediately turned it over to Dizon (t.s.n., p. 22, Nov. 5, 1965; p. 23, Feb. 11, 1966).

"Finally, petitioner claims he was not paid his salary from June 15, 1965 to July 12, 1965, when his services were terminated. Respondents aver that 'petitioner did not work for respondents and consequently, no salary has paid to him for that period' (par. 10, Answer).

"The Court finds that after the surprise check by Villanueva on June 10, 1965, on instructions from respondent company's Manila office, Villanueva, Dizon and petitioner were recalled to Manila (t.s.n., p. 11, April 12, 1966). In Manila with respondent company, petitioner drove the car for the head nurse and was sent on an errand by Mr. Ascalon and Mr. Greder, respondent company's executives. He reported between June 15 to June 22, 1965, after which he was told to take his vacation leave for the year, which leave lasted up to July 9, 1965, when he was told to report the following Monday. On said day, he was told by Ascalon to resign (t.s.n., pp. 12-18, Feb. 11, 1966).

"No evidence whatsoever, contradictory or otherwise, on this issue was adduced by respondents." (Pp. 18-23, rec.).

On March 28, 1969, petitioners received a copy of the aforesaid decision. On April 2, 1969, petitioners filed their motion for reconsideration of only the portion of the decision directing the reinstatement of private respondent with back wages (Annex E, pp. 35-38, rec.), which was denied by the Court en banc in an order dated July 8, 1969 (Annex B, p. 25, rec.), which order was received on August 1, 1969 by the petitioners.

Petitioners interposed this appeal on August 8, 1969 (Annex F, p. 39, rec.).

It should be stressed that petitioners did not raise any jurisdictional issue in their Answer (pp. 30-34, rec.).

From the 1956 case of *PAFLU vs. Tan*[1] to the 1972 case of *Colgate-Palmolive vs. De la Cruz, et. al.*,[2] WE ruled that the Court of Industrial Relations has jurisdiction over cases involving the Eight-Hour Labor Law (Commonwealth Act No. 444), or the Minimum Wage Law (Republic Act No. 875), or certified by the President to the Court of Industrial Relations as affecting national interest (Republic Act No. 875), provided that there exists between the parties an employer-employee relationship or the dismissed employee seeks his reinstatement.[3]

Well-imbedded, likewise, is the principle, as in actions before the regular courts, that the jurisdiction of the Court

of Industrial Relations over a case is determined by the allegations in the complaint or petition,[4] or by the issues raised by the parties, and not by their success or failure in proving the averments in their respective pleadings.[5]

And the Court of Industrial Relations exercises jurisdiction over a case as long as it concerns an unfair labor practice, even if no unfair labor practice charge has as yet been filed or even if the same is not alleged in the complaint or pleadings of the parties.[6]

The complaint dated August 6, 1965 filed by herein private respondent Perfecto Gianan specifically claims for overtime pay and for reinstatement on the ground that he was unjustly dismissed on July 12, 1965, with back wages, expressly praying that respondents be required to comply with the Eight-Hour Labor Law (pp. 27-28, rec.). The fact that it dismissed his claim for overtime pay for insufficiency of evidence, does not divest respondent Court of Industrial Relations of its jurisdiction.[7]

The employer-employee relationship is not terminated by an illegal dismissal of the employee.[8] Herein respondent Court of Industrial Relations expressly held that herein petitioners wrongfully terminated the services of herein private respondent Gianan.

In *Alhambra Industries Inc. vs. C.I.R.*,[9] WE reiterated the rule against split jurisdiction; because the same foments piecemeal resort from one court to another generating multiplicity of suits, which situation is intolerable as well as abhorrent in a well-ordered administration of justice.[10]

As stated by Mr. Justice Sanchez in the Rheem case, *supra*:

"To draw a tenuous, jurisdictional line is to undermine stability in labor litigations. A piecemeal resort to one court and another gives rise to multiplicity of suits. To force the employees to shuttle from one court to another to secure full redress is a situation gravely prejudicial. The time to be lost, effort wasted, anxiety augmented, additional expense incurred - these are considerations which weigh heavily against split jurisdiction. Indeed, it is more in keeping with orderly administration of justice that all the causes of action here 'be cognizable and heard by only one court: the Court of Industrial Relations.'"

To compel private respondent Perfecto Gianan to file anew before the regular court his action for reinstatement with back wages and for unpaid salaries from June 15, 1965 to July 12, 1965, would be to require him "to go up (his) calvary once more" which is as inequitous as it is cruel.[11] In this regard, the petitioners herein did not question the jurisdiction of the respondent Court of Industrial Relations in their answer dated September 14, 1965 nor during the trial before the Court of Industrial Relations. Applying the doctrine in *Tijam vs. Sibonghanoy*, *supra*, it is too late for the petitioner as loser to challenge the jurisdiction or power of the Court of Industrial Relations after voluntarily submitting the case to its jurisdiction and after encountering an adverse decision on the merits; because the doctrine of estoppel by laches or of stale demands is grounded "on public policy which requires, for the peace of society, the discouragement of stale claims and, unlike the statute of limitations, is not a mere question of time but is principally a question of the inequity or unfairness of permitting a right or claim to be enforced or asserted." [12]

Private respondent had submitted all his evidence after herein petitioner filed on September 14, 1965 his answer, against his wrongful dismissal before respondent Court of Industrial Relations, which sustained his contention that he was removed without just cause. To require him again to submit such evidence before the regular court three years after the decision on March 24, 1969 in his favor, would be most unfair if not heartless; because, this poor soul will have to go through another agonizing and protracted trial, and incur additional expenses he can ill-afford which will inevitably so heighten his anxiety and feeling of despair. His situation will become more pitiful if his witnesses are no longer available. When the ends of justice could not be served thereby, WE consider

split jurisdiction anathema. Thus, Mr. Chief Justice Concepcion, then Associate Justice, speaking for the Court in the 1964 case of *Francisco, et. al. vs. City of Davao, et. al.*,^[13] stated:

"The ends of justice would not be served, if we now dismiss the case - over nine (9) years after it had been initiated - and bade the plaintiffs to start all over again, following the procedure that the defendants had asked the lower court, but which the latter refused, to require. At any rate, since the legal question raised in the pleadings has reached this Court, and the assessment complained of is manifestly violative of the clear and express provision of the law, it is best that we decide said question, instead of further deferring its resolution."

Restating the foregoing pronouncement, Mr. Justice Castro, speaking for the Court, added as footnote to a 1968 decision, thus:

"The Supreme Court has on several occasions resolved actions on the merits, instead of remanding them to the trial court for further proceedings, as where the ends of justice would not be subserved by the remand of the case (*Francisco and Francisco vs. The City of Davao, et. al.*, L-20654, Dec. 24, 1964), or where public interest demands an early disposition of the case (*Republic vs. Security Credit and Acceptance Corporation, et. al.*, L-20583, Jan. 23, 1967, 19 SCRA 58, 1967A PHILD 59). And in *Samal vs. Court of Appeals* (L-8579, May 25, 1956, 99 Phil. 230), * * *. But when the trial court had already received all the evidence presented by both parties, consequently, the Court * * * is in a position to pass upon said evidence and decide the case on its merits and there is no necessity for remanding the case to the trial court for further proceedings."^[14]

The herein petitioners do not question the correctness of the conclusion of the Court of Industrial Relations that private respondent Gianan was unlawfully dismissed from the service; and even if it did, WE are bound by the findings of fact of the Court of Industrial Relations on this score, which findings are binding on Us in the absence of grave abuse of discretion on the part of the Court of Industrial Relations.

WHEREFORE , the judgment appealed from is hereby affirmed, with costs against petitioners.

Concepcion, C.J., Reyes, J.B.L., Makalintal, Zaldivar, Fernando, Teehankee, Antonio, and Esguerra, JJ., concur.

Castro, J., concurs, subject to the qualification made by Justice Barredo on the matters of jurisdiction and estoppel.

Barredo, J., concurs in separate opinion.

[1] L-9115, Aug. 31, 1956, 99 Phil. 854, 861-62.

[2] L-23015, May 30, 1972.

[3] See also cases of *Mindanao Rapid Co., etc., et. al. vs. Omandam*, L-23058, Nov. 27, 1971; *Dominguez vs. Pepsi Cola, etc.*, L-23473, Nov. 27, 1971; *Glipo vs. A.L. Ammen, etc.*, L-23871; *Democratic Labor Assoc., etc. vs. Judge G. Villazor, etc., et. al.*, L-24232, Nov. 27, 1971; *Manila Cordage Workers' Union vs. Hon. Samuel F. Reyes, etc.*, L-24718, Nov. 27, 1971; *Nat. Mines & Allied Workers' Union vs. Hon. Perfecto Quicho, etc., et al.*, L-24956, Nov. 27, 1971, 42 SCRA 250, 258-60; *Meralco Workers' Union vs. Gaerlan*, L-24505, April 30, 1970, 32 SCRA 419; *Martinez vs. Union de Maquinistas, etc.*, L-19455-56, Jan. 30, 1967, 19 SCRA 167; *Bay View Hotel, Inc. vs. Manila Hotel Workers' Union, et. al.*, L-21803, Dec. 17, 1966, 18 SCRA 946; *Mercado vs. Elizalde & Co.*, L-18962, Dec. 23, 1964, 12 SCRA 547; *Campos, et. al. vs. Manila Railroad Co., et. al.*, L-17905, May 25, 1962, 5 SCRA 93.

[4] *Progressive Labor, etc. vs. Atlas Consolidated, et. al.*, L-27585, May 29, 1970, 33 SCRA 349, 353; *Insular Sugar, etc., et. al. vs. C.I.R et al.*, L-19247, May 31, 1963, 8 SCRA 270, 272; *E.J. Nell Co. vs. Cubacub*, L-20842,

June 23, 1965, 14 SCRA 419, 421-22; Jose Serrano vs. Luis Serrano, L-19562, May 23, 1964, 11 SCRA 22, 24; Campos Rueda vs. Bautista, L-18453, Sept. 29, 1962, 6 SCRA 240-244.

[5] Assoc. Labor Union vs. Borromeo, Nov. 27, 1968, 26 SCRA 88, 100-101.

[6] Colgate-Palmolive vs. De la Cruz, et. al., supra; Mindanao Rapid, etc., et. al. vs. Omandam, supra; Rustan vs. Dalisay L-32891, April 29, 1971, 38 SCRA 500, 506-507; Phil. Comm., etc. vs. Nolasco, L-24984, July 29, 1968, 24 SCRA 321; Leoquinco vs. Canada Dry, etc., L-28621, Feb. 22, 1971, 37 SCRA 535.

[7] Assoc. Labor Union vs. Borromeo, supra.

[8] Insular Sugar, etc. vs. C.I.R., et. al., supra; Fernando vs. Angat Labor Union, May 30, 1962, 5 SCRA 248, 250.

[9] Oct. 30, 1970, 35 SCRA 550.

[10] See also Rheem, etc. vs. Ferrer, 19 SCRA 130, 135, Jan. 27, 1967 cited in Pacana vs. Cebu Autobus Co., April 30, 1970, 32 SCRA 442, 449.

[11] Tijam vs. Sibonghanoy, L-21450, April 15, 1968, 23 SCRA 29, 37.

[12] 23 SCRA 29, 35, italics supplied.

[13] 12 SCRA 628, 634.

[14] Republic vs. Central Surety, L-27802, Oct. 26, 1968, 25 SCRA 641, 650-51.

CONCURRING OPINION

BARREDO, J.:

I concur, but rather than join the view that because petitioners did not challenge the jurisdiction of the Court of Industrial Relations at the inception of this case, they are now estopped from raising that question, pursuant to Sibonghanoy, which view accepts the tenability of conferment of jurisdiction by estoppel, a proposition which I am still unprepared to accept to be consistent with fundamental or basic principles, since to my mind there is no exception to the principle that jurisdiction over the subject matter can be conferred only by specific provision of law or by necessary implication therefrom, I prefer to sustain the jurisdiction of the industrial court in this case by adhering to the following ruling of this Court in Campos vs. Manila Railroad Co., G.R. No. L-17905, May 25, 1962, 5 SCRA 93:

"We may, therefore, restate, for the benefit of the bench and the bar, that in order that the Court of Industrial Relations may acquire jurisdiction over a controversy in the light of Republic Act No. 875, the following circumstances must be present: (a) there must exist between the parties an employer-employee relationship, or the claimant must seek his reinstatement; and (b) the controversy must relate to a case certified by the President to the CIR as one involving national interest, or must have a bearing on an unfair labor practice charge, or must arise either under the Eight-Hour Labor Law, or under the Minimum Wage Law. In default of any of these circumstances the claim becomes a mere money claim that comes under the jurisdiction of the regular courts.

In the case at bar, it is undisputed that petitioner merely seeks his reinstatement with back wages. He does not claim any salary differential nor overtime pay that may make his case come either under the Eight-Hour Labor Law or the Minimum Wage Law. Neither does he prefer any unfair labor practice charge against his employer. Consequently, the Court of Industrial Relations has no power to act on his claim for the same is a mere money

claim that comes under the jurisdiction of the regular courts."

Inasmuch as petitioner sought reinstatement to his job in his complaint and since, respondent also prayed therein "that respondents be required to comply with Eight Hour Labor Law," the industrial court must have considered this case as one "arising under the Eight Hour Labor Law." It is, therefore, clear to me that on the basis of the allegations and prayer of petitioner's complaint, the Court of Industrial Relations properly acquired jurisdiction over this case pursuant to the above ruling. The fact that the court did not find in the evidence before it sufficient ground to grant all of petitioners' prayers did not in any manner work to minimize, much less withdraw, the jurisdiction it had thus acquired. In other words, the inability of the court to grant one of the two prayers of respondent, which were: (1) reinstatement with backwages and (2) determination of his hours of work for purposes of overtime pay, namely, the second, does not mean that it is powerless to grant the other. I believe it is illogical and productive of inconvenience and unfairness to hold that just because the industrial court found respondent's evidence on the issue of hours of work and overtime pay insufficient, it became powerless to order reinstatement of petitioner, even after it had found his dismissal completely unjustified. Of course, the teaching of Rheem against forcing "employees to shuttle from one court to another to secure full redress is a situation gravely prejudicial"[1] applies here. In civil cases, it is a familiar rule that when there is evidence to support its action, a court of first instance may grant a relief below the level of those within its original jurisdiction if after trial it finds that the matter, which according to the allegations of the complaint is within its jurisdiction, has not been proven.[2] In criminal cases, when an information or complaint alleges an offense within the jurisdiction of the Court of First Instance, but at the trial, the offense proven, although necessarily included in that alleged, is one within the original jurisdiction of an inferior court, the former retains the authority and power to render judgment imposing the penalty for the lesser offense.[3] By clear analogy, the Court of Industrial Relations cannot subsequently lose jurisdiction it has originally acquired only because the evidence submitted would not justify the award of all the demands made in the complaint.

Incidentally, notwithstanding the long line of decisions starting from PAFLU vs. Tan, 99 Phil. 854, including Campos vs. Manila Railroad Co., supra, I cannot find concrete basis for the ruling that since the enactment of the Industrial Peace Act, cases arising from the application of Commonwealth Act 444 or the Eight Hour Labor Law fall within the jurisdiction of the Court of Industrial Relations. Of course, as regards the reference in the above decision to some cases under the Minimum Wage Law, unfair labor practice cases and cases certified by the President, there can be no question that the pertinent statutory provisions justify the rulings therein made. With respect to the Eight Hour Labor Law, however, the only provisions of the Industrial Peace Act that makes mention thereof is Section 7 which reads thus:

"SEC. 7. Fixing Working Conditions by Court Order. - In order to prevent undue restriction of free enterprise for capital and labor and to encourage the truly democratic method of regulating the relations between the employer and employee by means of an agreement freely entered into in collective bargaining, no court of the Philippines shall have the power to set wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of employment except as in this Act is otherwise provided and except as is provided in Republic Act Numbered Six hundred two and Commonwealth Act Numbered Four, hundred forty-four as to hours of work."

Surely, no one can pretend that the language of this provision warrants the conclusion that cases arising under Commonwealth Act 444 are within the jurisdiction of the industrial court.

In this connection, I would like to stress, however, that I am making these observations, not for the purposes of this case, but merely to point out a possible reason for the reopening of this particular question of jurisdiction in an appropriate case wherein it might be proper to make such a re-examination. Indeed, such an occasion should provide this Court with the opportunity of further clarifying the boundaries of jurisdiction between the ordinary

courts and the Court of Industrial Relations, which I must admit continue to baffle the members of the Bar, to the possible corresponding prejudice to the interests of justice, particularly where demands for reinstatements, backwages, and overtime pay of poor employees and laborers are involved.

For the purposes of this case, stare decisis or jurisprudential rule requires adherence to PAFLU vs. Tan, *supra*.

[1] See p. 411 of the main opinion.

[2] *Macondray & Co. vs. Yangtz Ins. Asso.* 5 Phil. 789.

[3] *V. S. Mallari*, 24 Phil. 368.

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