

VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC., PETITIONER, VS. COURT OF INDUSTRIAL; RELATIONS AND FREE VISAYAN WORKERS (NEGROS BRANCH), RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. L-17281. March 30, 1963

Ponente: PAREDES, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/6f7bbf4e1665/>

PAREDES, J.:

The facts of the case, which are not disputed by the parties, are as follows:

Herein petitioner is a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Philippines; operates a sugar central or a processing mill at Victorias, Negros Occidental, and is the owner of sugar cane plantations, known as Haciendas "Bacayan, Pacita, Florencia and VICMICO Nursery" all located at Victorias, and "Begonia and Natividad", located at Mahalapa, same province. Respondent Free Visayan Workers (Union for short), is a legitimate labor organization, some members of which are employed by petitioner in the above-named haciendas and the VICMICO Nursery. On May 9, 1958, the Free Visayan Workers sent to herein petitioner a set of proposals' for a collective bargaining contract in behalf of the laborers working in the sugarcane haciendas of the Victorias Milling Company. In reply to the said communication, herein petitioner, on July 29, 1958, informed the "Union that it could not possibly enter, into a collective bargaining contract or negotiate for the same, alleging that the provisions of the Industrial Peace Act (No: 875) are not applicable to agricultural workers. A charge of Unfair Labor Practice under Sec. 4(a), subpar. 6, in relation to Sees. 13 and 17 of said Act, was presented by the Union with the respondent CIR. After an investigation, the prosecutor of the respondent CIR filed a complaint for Unfair Labor Practice with said Court, against the milling company, docketed as Case No. 50 ULP-Iloilo. A motion to Dismiss was interposed by herein petitioner, putting in issue the applicability of the provisions of Act No. 875 to herein petitioner, on its refusal to bargain collectively with - respondent Union. On February 11, 1959, over the opposition of the Union, respondent CIR denied the motion to dismiss and ordered herein petitioner to Answer the complaint. After the motion for reconsideration presented by Victorias Milling Co., Inc., was denied, the present action for prohibition was instituted and given due course.

The only issue we are called upon to determine in the instant proceedings is "whether or not the Industrial Peace Act applies to agricultural workers", since there is no dispute that the members of .respondent Union are. merely laborers in the different sugarcane plantations of the petitioner.

In the case of "Boy Scouts of the Philippines vs. Juliana Araos", 102 Phil., 1080, Jan. 28, 1958, We stated—

"* * * For instance, ° there'can be no question that under our Industrial Peace Act, the Republic of any political division or subdivision, like, a province or municipality, must and should also be excluded from the definition of employer. Similarly, under the term 'employee' of our law, agricultural laborers or individuals employed in the domestic service, like private or domestic drivers, housemaids, kitchen helper, etc., should be exempted."

It is claimed, however, that the above is an obiter dictum. In a case, involving workers in a sugar central, We made a distinction between those performing exclusively agricultural chores from: those who are not. Thus, We

said—

"Where petitioner is a highly mechanized industrial concern with the work of planting and harvesting clearly distinguished from that of transporting, the cane from the fields, first to a switch and later to the mill, all its workers are to be considered industrial workers, except those devoted to purely agricultural work." (Pampanga Sugar Mills vs. PASUMIL Workers Union, 98 Phil., 5BS; Feb. 29, 1966).

It is, therefore, the nature of the work which classifies a worker as "one falling under the exemption as 'agricultural laborers'". The members of respondent Union are merely agricultural laborers in petitioners haciendas, the principal work of which is planting and harvesting sugar canes and other chores incidental to ordinary farming operations. They are agricultural laborers. Being agricultural workers, and in the supposition that the milling company had committed unfair labor practice upon them, the Court of Agrarian Relations has jurisdiction over the case.

"The landholder shall not discourage, directly or indirectly, the formation, maintenance or growth of a union or organization of tenants in his landholding, but he shall not initiate, dominate, assist or interfere in the formation or administration of any such union or organization." (Section 27, par. 5, of RA 1199, as amended by EA 2263, Approved June 19, 1959).

"We are Inclined, to uphold the negative view not only because an agricultural laborer does not come within the purview of the word employee defined in Section 2(d) of Republic Act No. 87b, but also because any matter that may pertain to the relation of tenant and landlord comes under the Agricultural Tenancy Act (Republic Act No. 1199, as amended by Rep. Act No. 2263), and any controversy that may arise, between them as an incident of their relationship comes under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Agrarian Relations created by Republic Act No. 1267. * * *

* * * * *

"With regard to our conclusion that the present controversy comes under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Agrarian Relations, suffice it to state that the latter court was created for the 'enforcement of all laws and regulations governing the relation of capital and labor on all agricultural lands under any system of cultivation' (Section 1, Republic Act 1267, as amended by Republic Act 1409) and was given exclusive jurisdiction over the entire Philippines to consider, investigate, decide, and settle all questions, matters, controversies, or disputes involving all those relationships established by law which determine the varying rights of persons in the cultivation and, use of agricultural land where one of the parties works the land' (Section 7, Ibid.). Complainants, therefore, should have lodged their complaint with the agrarian court for the redress of their grievance considering this broad power given to it By law even if nothing is said therein relative to unfair labor practice. The subsequent enactment of Republic Act No. 2263 which grants to agricultural workers the right to file an action of this, nature merely serves to confirm this jurisdiction of the agrarian court. The conclusion is, therefore, inescapable that the industrial court has improperly assumed jurisdiction over the present case' for it comes under the exclusive jurisdiction of the agrarian court." (Santos vs. CIR, et al., G.R. No. L-17196, Dec. 28, 1961).

"An unfair labor practice cases involving agricultural laborers engaged in agricultural pursuits are within the jurisdiction of the Court of Agrarian Relations. (Hacienda Esperanza, et al. vs. CIR, et al., G.R. No. L-18708, Nov. 28, 1962).

Conformably with the foregoing, the writ is granted, the order denying the motion to dismiss is set aside and respondent Court is hereby ordered to desist from taking any action in Case No. 50 ULP-Iloilo. Costs taxed against respondent Visayan Free Workers, which is hereby reserved the right to file their complaint in the proper court.

Bengzon, C. J., Padilla, Bautista Angelo, Labrador, Concepcion, Reyes, J.B.L., Barrera, Dizon, Regala, and Makalintal, JJ., concur.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.