

MANILA TRADING & SUPPLY CO, (MANTRADE AUTOMOTIVE CORP.), PETITIONER, VS. WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION COMMISSION AND JULIANA VDA. DE TEOFILO, RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. L-31259. March 31, 1971

Ponente: CASTRO, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/c1ba5616c106/>

CASTRO, J.:

By this petition for mandamus, certiorari and prohibition against the Workmen's Compensation Commission, the herein petitioner Manila Trading & Supply Company, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the MANTRADE) seeks a review of the order of the Commission dated November 12, 1969 in RO4-WC Case

The essential facts are not disputed.

On July 31, 1968, the MANTRADE was adjudged liable for the payment of workmen's compensation benefits in RO4-WCC Case 6947 by a referee of the respondent Workmen's Compensation Commission. On September 25, 1969, this adverse decision was affirmed by one of the commissioners of the Commission; a copy of the decision of the commissioner was received by the MANTRADE on September 30, 1969. Influenced by the belief that under section 49 of Act 3428, as amended, it had fifteen (15) days or until October 15, 1969 to move for a reconsideration of the commissioner's decision, the MANTRADE, on October 14, 1969, filed with the Commission a "Motion for Extension of Time to File Motion for Reconsideration and Review by the Commission En Banc." This motion and two other similar motions subsequently filed by the MANTRADE were denied.

Hence, the present recourse.

The Commission's repeated denial of the MANTRADE'S motions for reconsideration appears to be premised upon its conviction that it could not acquire appellate jurisdiction over the aforesaid case because the said motions were filed well beyond the period of ten (10) days allowed by section 1 of Rule 17 of the Rules of the Workmen's Compensation Commission. This particular section reads:

"SEC. 1. Motion or Petition for Recon-sideration. - Any party in interest may seek the reconsideration of the decision or order of a member of the Commission by the Commission en banc by filing a motion or petition for reconsideration within ten (10) days from receipt of said decision or order." (effective December 29, 1964)

It likewise was the Commission's opinion that, the period of fifteen (15) days mentioned in section 49 of Act 3428, as amended, within which a petition for review or motion for reconsideration may be filed, "refers to orders, awards or decisions of the referees and not to decisions or orders of the Workmen's Compensation Commission as an appellate body."

The pertinent portion of section 49 of the Workmen's Compensation Act, upon which there is a basic conflict of opinion between the parties before us, provides:

"SEC. 49. Procedure. ... Any party in interest who is dissatisfied with the order entered by the referee may

petition to review the same and the referee may re-open said case, or may amend or modify said order, and such amended or modified order shall be a final award unless objection be made thereto by petition for review. In case said referee does not amend or modify said order, he shall refer the entire case to the Commissioner, who shall thereupon review the entire record in said case, and, in his discretion, may take or order the taking of additional testimony, and shall make his findings of facts and enter his award thereon. The award of the Commissioner shall be final unless a petition to review the same shall be filed by an interested party. Every petition for review shall be in writing and shall specify in detail the particular errors and objections. Such petition must be filed within fifteen days after the entry of any referee's order or award of the Commissioner unless further time is granted by the referee or the Commissioner within said fifteen days. All parties in interest shall be given due notice of entry of any referee's order or any award of the Commissioner, and said period of fifteen days shall begin to run only after such notice ..."

There would appear to be ample logic in the position assumed by the MANTRADE. Nevertheless, section 49 should not be analyzed or appreciated in isolation. This section should be construed in relation to the history of the Act and identified with the rest of the provisions thereof to harmonize it with the law as a whole.

In our view, the subsequent historical development of Art 3428 provides the clue to the appearance, retention and meaning of the word "Commissioner" in the aforementioned section 49.

In 1952, Congress incorporated, by way of R.A. 772, several far-reaching amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Act. This statute, however, aside from modifying various provisions, added several new sections, including sections 7-A and 43 to 55.

Section 7-A, in particular, as inserted by R.A. 772, reads as follows:

"SEC. 7-A. Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, Appointment. - There is hereby created in the Department of Labor the Office of the Work-men's Compensation Commissioner, hereinafter de-signated the Commissioner, who shall be assisted by a Deputy Workmen's Commissioner. The Com-missioner and Deputy Commissioner shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines ..."

By virtue of the foregoing provision, the Office of the Work-men's Compensation Commissioner was established and to it was given the administration of the Workmen's Compensation Act.[1] In consonance with this purpose, the amendatory law also prescribed that the Commissioner shall hear claims for compensation under the Act; that after the hearing of a case by the Commissioner, his deputy or any referee, the same shall be decided on its merits; that fifteen (15) days after the promulgation of the decision the same shall become final, unless previously appealed;[2] and that the decision of the Commissioner shall be subject to appeal to the Supreme Court, in the same manner and within the same period as provided by law and by the Rules of Court for an appeal from the Court of Industrial Relations to the Supreme Court.[3]

On June 9, 1954, however, Congress passed a law, not directly amending any provision of the workmen's compensation statute, but providing for the creation of a Government Survey and Reorganization Commission (or GSRC) that would re-structure the entire governmental administrative network to make it refund more adequately and reliably to the expanding needs of the country. This law was R A. 997, otherwise known as the Reorganization Act of 1954 (amended on June 9, 1955 by R.A. 1241).

Sometime in 1956, the GSRC came out with Reorganization Plan 20-A, a certain portion of which, as later implemented by Executive Order 218, s.1956, established, in lieu of the Office the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, a 3-member Workmen's Compensation Commission. Purely administrative functions were, under the plan, given to the Bureau of Workmen's Compensation which was also constituted.[4]

On April 15, 1957, the Commission published its Rules in the Official Gazette,[5] pursuant to paragraph 12 of

Article III of the Plan which provides, inter alia:

"Except as otherwise provided in this Article, the powers and duties pertaining to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Workmen's Compensation are transferred to and shall be assumed and exercised by the Commission, which body is authorized to delegate the same to the extent that it shall remain an appeal source with corresponding duties of promulgating related rules and regulations. ... The Commission may promulgate rules and regulations governing its internal functions as a quasi-judicial body including the power of each member to decide appealed cases from a Regional Office, allowance for appeal from the decision of an individual member to the Commission en banc, and other allied matters. ..."

It is noteworthy to mention in this connection that these rules provided that aggrieved parties shall have a period of ten (10) days within which to seek a reconsideration of a decision of a member of the Commission with the Commission en banc, and a similar period of time within which to appeal from the decision of the Commission en banc to the Supreme Court.

But soon after the Commission began to function, cases were brought to this Court directly from individual members of the Commission instead of being reviewed first by the Commission en banc. In all these cases, this Court ruled that a party aggrieved by a decision of an individual commissioner should first seek a reconsideration thereof with the Commission en banc before an appeal could be brought to this Court.[6]

It thus appears that as early as in 1957 we already sanctioned the authority of the Commission, by virtue of the reorganization plan, to promulgate rules and regulations for the review of a decision or order of an individual member by the Commission en banc before the same could be elevated to this Court for review. In effect, then, this Court stamped its approval on the interpretation of the Commission that a distinction should be made between itself as a collegiate body and its members as individual commissioners, insofar, at least, as the availing of remedies under the set-up established under the reorganization plan was concerned.

Then, on June 20, 1964, a new statute amending Act 342, as amended, took effect. The new law, R.A. 4119, introduced several important modifications. And, as if to allay all doubt then apparently prevalent among the members of the bench and the bar regarding the lawful authority of the Commission (as established under the reorganization plan) to adjudicate compensation claims under the Act, this statute expressly provided, in an amendment to section 7-A of the Act, that the Commission "as constituted and organized under the provisions and authority of Republic Act Numbered Nine hundred ninety-seven, as amended by Republic Act Numbered Twelve hundred forty-one, shall continue to exercise the powers, functions and duties under Act Numbered Thirty-four hundred and twenty-eight, as amended."

Shortly after the passage of R. A. 4119, the Commission published in the Official Gazette, on December 14, 1964, its Rules relative to the processing and adjudication of workmen's compensation claims. This new set of rules took effect on December 29, 1964.

When the Commission was first established under the reorganization plan, a procedural distinction was made between review of the award or order of a member of the Commission and review of a decision of the Commission en banc. This distinction received the implicit but clear approval of this Court. Then, in 1964, when R.A. 4119 was passed, the law not only expressly provided that the said Commission as then constituted shall continue to exist, but as well reproduced paragraph 12 of Article III of Reorganization Plan 20-A, to the effect that "Except as otherwise provided [t]herein, the jurisdictions, powers and duties [t]heretofore pertaining to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner ... shall be assumed and exercised by the Commission, which body is authorized to delegate the same to the extent that it shall remain an appeal source with corresponding duties of promulgating related rules and regulations."

R.A. 4119 likewise provided, in the same way as the reorganization plan, that "The Commission may promulgate rule and regulations governing its internal functions as a quasi-judicial body including the power of each member to decide ap-pealed cases from a referee, allowance for appeal from the decision of an individual member to the Commission en banc, and other allied rules covering jurisdiction to review, modify, or affirm all rules and regulations prepared by the Bureau."

The re-enactment, in R.A. 4119, of all the powers and duties given to the Commission under the reorganization plan, such as the power of each member to hear and adjudicate workmen's compensation cases and the power to promulgate rules for appeal from the decision of an individual member to the Commission en banc, indicate indubitably Congress' intention to preserve the practices of the Commission in the matter of the review of the orders and decisions of its individual members and allied matters. This practice, as we said earlier, had already been sanctioned by this Court even before R.A. 4119 became a law.

The only possible explanation that can be given for the re-tention of the term "Commissioner" in the Workmen's Compensation Act, even with the enactment of R.A. 4119, appears to be that this latter statute did not modify all, but only some of, the sections added to the Act by R.A. 772, such as the disputed sections 49. From a reading of the amendments made by R.A. 4119, it can be safely concluded that had R.A. 4119 touched those sections, the proper corresponding changes would have been made.

A perceptive analysis of R.A. 4119 which modified or amended those sections or provisions incorporated into the Act by R.A. 772 will unfailingly disclose that where the latter used the word "Commissioner," the former substituted either the word "Commission" or "Bureau." Consequently, it will be found that it is solely in those sections added to the Act by R.A. 772, but not touched in any manner by R.A. 4119, where the word "Commissioner" still remains.

We thus find that it is the clear and obvious legislative design to identify the term, "Commissioner" as referring to the Commission en banc, as distinguished from the individual co-mmissioners or members thereof.

Considering the totality of these circumstances and the obvious intention of the law as expressed in section 7-A of the Act, we cannot accept the view in the absence of a clear and overriding indication of legislative intent to the contrary, Congress did not mean to give the Workmen's Compensation Act a consistent and uniform design and phraseology. Indeed, the nature and structure of our legal and judicial system demand that this Court infuse into our statutes such symmetry and evenness in construction and meaning to the end that no one may doubt what the law really is.

We therefore hold that the period of time within which appeal (motion for reconsideration) should be made to the Commission en banc from the decision or order of an individual Commissioner is ten (10) days from official receipt of a copy thereof by the aggrieved party.[7] Consequently, the appeal (Motion for reconsideration) by the MANTRADE to the Commission en banc having been filed out of time, the decision in the case at bar has become final and executory.

ACCORDINGLY, the instant petition is dismissed, at peti-tioner's cost. Immediate execution of the final decision in RO4--WC case 6947 is hereby ordered.

Concepcion, C.J., Reyes, J.B.L., Dizon, Makalintal, Zaldivar, Fernando, Teehankee, Barredo, Villamor, and Makasiar, JJ., concur.

[1] Section 47(a) of the Act provides that the "Commissioner shall have full power and authority to take charge of the administration of the Workmen's Compensation Act."

[2] Section 50, WCA.

[3] Section 46, WCA.

[4] Of no relevance to this case are the rulings of the Supreme Court (a) "that it was not the intention of Congress, in enacting R.A. 997, to authorize the transfer of powers and jurisdiction granted to the courts of justice, from these to the officials to be appointed or offices to be created by the Reorganization Plan" [20-A], and (b) "the Commission was not authorized ... to take away from these [courts of justice] their jurisdiction and transfer said jurisdiction to the officials appointed and created under the Reorganization Plan." (Corominas, Jr. vs. Labor Standards Commission, L-14837; Manila Central University vs. Calupitan, L-15483; Wong Chun vs. Carlim, L-13940 and Balrodgan Co., Ltd. vs. Fuentes, L-15015, June 30, 1961, 2 SCRA 721; Pastoral vs. WCC, L-12903, July 31, 1961, 2 SCRA 850.)

[5] 53 O.G. 2112 (April 15, 1957).

[6] Manila Jockey Club, Inc. vs. N. Baens del Rosario, L-15521, May 31, 1961, 2 SCRA 462; National Shipyards and Steel Corporation vs. Arca, L-12249, May 6, 1957; Madrigal Shipping Co. vs. Del Rosario, L-13130, October 31, 1959; Republic vs. Inciong, L-14298, April 29, 1960.

[7] See Rules of the Workmen's Compensation Commission (effective December 29, 1964).

"SEC. 1. When and with Whom Filed. - Any party in interest who is dissatisfied with the decision or order of the referee may within fifteen (15) days from receipt of notice thereof file with the re-feree a petition for the review or reconsideration of said decision or order." (Rule 15)

"SEC. 1. Motion or Petition for Reconsi-deration. - Any party in interest may seek the re-consideration of the decision or order of a member of the Commission by the Commission en banc by filing a motion or petition for reconsideration with-in ten (10) days from receipt of said decision or order." (Rule 17)

"SEC. 1. Time of Appeal. - Any party in interest may appeal from any decision or order of the Commission en banc to the Supreme Court within ten (10) days from receipt of said decision or or-der in the manner provided for under Rule 43 of the Rules of Court." (Rule 18)

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.