

**PAMPANGA SUGAR DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, INC., PETITIONER,
VS. F. A. FUENTES, ET AL., RESPONDENTS.***G.R. No. L-14738. July 31, 1961*

Ponente: DE LEON, J.

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Original petition for certiorari and prohibition with preliminary injunction.

On August 8, 1958, respondents Pablo Abillanoza, et al., who are all employed by the Pampanga Sugar Development Company, Inc., herein petitioner, filed a complaint against the latter with Regional Office No. 3 of the Department of Labor for the collection of the balance of wages alleged to be still due them for work rendered on Sundays and legal holidays, with legal interest from the original date of the filing of the complaint until actual payment, plus attorney's fees.

Instead of answering, the petitioner company, on September 4, 1958, filed a motion to dismiss the complaint on the grounds that it states no cause of action; that the alleged cause of action is barred by prior judgment and the statute of limitations; and that the Regional Office has no jurisdiction over the subject matter of the action due to the unconstitutionality or invalidity of Reorganization Plan No. 20-A, dated December 10, 1956, under which the regional offices of the Department of Labor were established. The motion to dismiss was opposed by respondents Pablo Abillanoza, et al., and on September 16, 1958, Marcos Plomantes, Hearing Officer of Regional Office No. 3, denied the same for lack of merit.

Alleging that claims under Commonwealth Act No. 444, as in the case at bar, are exclusively cognizable by the Court of Industrial Relations, petitioner filed a motion for reconsideration. The motion, however, was on October 24, 1958 denied by Hearing Officer Plomantes, whereupon petitioner filed a second motion for reconsideration. The latter motion having been also denied by Plomantes in an order dated November 18, 1958, which required petitioner company to file its answer on or before December 2, 1958, said petitioner filed the present petition for certiorari and prohibition to annul the proceedings had below and to enjoin the respondents from further proceeding with the case, it being alleged, among other things, that Reorganization Plan No. 20-A is unconstitutional and that there is no appeal, nor any other plain, speedy and adequate remedy available in the ordinary course of law. The petition was given due course, and to restrain respondents from further proceeding in the premises in the meanwhile, this Court issued the writ of preliminary injunction prayed for upon petitioner's filing of a bond of P500.00.

The main point of controversy—the validity of Reorganization Plan No. 20-A, particularly section 25 thereof, which grants to the regional offices of the Department of Labor original and exclusive jurisdiction over money claims of laborers—has already been resolved by Us against the contention of herein respondents in the cases of Jose Corominas, Jr. et al. vs. Labor Standards Commission et al.; Manila Central University vs. Jose Calupitan et al.; Wong Chun vs. Diego Carlism et al.; Balrodgan Co., Ltd., et al. vs. F. A. Fuentes, et al., *supra*, p. 551) and Equitable Banking Corporation vs. Regional Office 3 et al., G. R. No. L-14442, all of which were decided on June

30, 1961. In the aforecited case of Equitable Banking Corporation vs. Regional Office 3 et al., supra, we said:

"* * * In the cases (Jose Corominas, Jr. et al. vs. Labor Standards Commission, et al., Manila Central University vs. Calupitan, et al., Wong Chun vs. Diego Carlim, et al., Balrodgan Co., Ltd. et al. vs. Fuentes et al. G. R. No. L-15015, June 30, 1961) recently decided by Us, We have held that the grant to regional offices of original and exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving money claims, including overtime pay, unpaid wages, wages for Sundays and legal holidays, etc., is not authorized by the provisions of Republic Act No. 997, the legislature not having intended to grant authority to the Reorganization Commission to deprive the courts of jurisdiction over said claims and transfer them to regional offices."

Wherefore, the instant petition is hereby granted, the orders of the respondent officials, dated September 16, October 24 and November 18, 1958 set aside, and the preliminary injunction heretofore issued made permanent. No pronouncements as to costs.

Bengzon, C. J., Padilla, Labrador, Concepcion, Reyes, J.B.L., Barrera, Paredes, Dizon, and Natividad, JJ., concur.

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