

MR. AND MRS. CU BU LIONG, PETITIONERS AND APPELLEES, VS. JULIANO E. ESTRELLA, ET AL., RESPONDENTS AND APPELLANTS.

G.R. No. L-14212. July 31, 1961

Ponente: BENGZON, C.J.

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BENGZON, C.J.:

These two appeals involve the validity of section 25 of Reorganization Plan No. 20-A issued under Republic Act No. 997. It reads as follows:

Each Regional Office shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction over all cases affecting all money claims arising from violations of labor standards on working conditions, including but not restrictive to: unpaid wages, underpayment, overtime, separation pay, and maternity leave of employees/laborers; and unpaid wages, overtime, separation pay, vacation pay and payment for medical services of domestic help. (Sec. 25, Reorganization Plan No. 20-A).

The first was a petition for certiorari and prohibition, filed in the Court of First Instance of Manila, against certain officials of the Department of Labor and the Sheriff of the City of Manila, to enjoin them from enforcing the decision of the Regional Office of said Department ordering the petitioning spouses to pay one Eleno Legronio the amount of P786.14 with legal interest, representing vacation pay, indemnity pay and overtime compensation. The petition rested on the allegation that said Reorganization Plan No. 20-A (sec. 25), upon which the respondent officials of the said department allegedly derived their power to adjudicate, was null and void.

The court, after due consideration of the matter, opined that the said section of the Reorganization Plan was invalid for having conferred judicial powers upon an executive agency. Accordingly, it granted the petition for certiorari, and issued a permanent injunction against the said respondent officials. The latter appealed to this Court, maintaining the validity of the said Reorganization Plan.

In the second, a complaint was filed before the Justice of the Peace Court of Dingle, Iloilo, to recover overtime pay, separation pay and additional pay for work on Sundays and legal holidays. After the issues had been joined and the hearing held, the said court rendered judgment requiring Edwin Fernandez to pay Berja the amounts of P1,317.35 P23.00 and P50.45 as overtime pay, separation pay and additional compensation. Defendant Fernandez appealed to the Court of First Instance of Iloilo, where plaintiff Berja submitted an amended complaint. Thereafter Fernandez moved to dismiss, on the ground of lack of jurisdiction because under Reorganization Plan No. 20-A, the issue should be threshed out not before the courts but before the Department of Labor Regional Office. Upholding the motion, the court dismissed the case.

Therefore, plaintiff Berja appealed to this Court challenging the validity of the said Reorganization Plan No. 20-A, on the theory of undue delegation of legislative powers to the executive branch of government.

As stated, both the above-entitled cases involve the validity of Reorganization Plan No. 20-A (sec. 25) promulgated in pursuance of Republic Act No. 997. No more shall be undertaken here than to reaffirm what we have categorically made clear in the very recent cases of Jose Corominas, Jr. et al. vs. Labor Standard

Commission, et al.,[1] Manila Central University vs. Jose Calupitan, et al.,[2] Wong Chun vs. Diego Carlino, et al.,[3] and Balrodgan Co. Ltd., et al. vs. F. A. Fuentes, et al.[4] We repeat that:

"So that it was not the intention of Congress, in enacting Republic Act No. 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. Congress is well aware of the provisions of the Constitution that judicial powers are vested only in the Supreme Court and in such courts as the law may establish." The Commission was not authorized to create courts of justice, or to take away from these their jurisdiction and transfer said jurisdiction to the officials appointed or offices created under the Reorganization Plan. The Legislature could not have intended to grant such powers to the Reorganization Commission, an executive body, as the Legislature may not and cannot delegate its power to legislate or create courts of justice to any other agency of the Government. (Chinese Flour Imported Ass. vs. Price Stabilization Board, 89 Phil., 439; Surigao Consolidated vs. Collector of Internal Revenue, 94 Phil., 492; 50 Off. Gaz., 1018 V. S. vs. Sheveport, 287 U. S. 77 L. ed. 175 and Johnson vs. San Diego, 42 P. 249, cited in 11 Am. Jur. 921-922).

"It is clear, therefore, that in vesting regional offices with the original and exclusive jurisdiction over money claims, the Commission overstepped the limits of its powers as conferred by Republic Act No. 997, which is merely that of reorganizing the departments, bureaus, and offices of the Executive Branch of the Government.

In consequence, we are constrained to hold and declare that the provision of Reorganization Plan No. 20-A particularly Section 25, which grants to the regional offices original and exclusive jurisdiction over money claims of Laborers, is null and void, said grant having been made without authority of Republic Act No. 997."

Wherefore as the Reorganization Plan (sec. 25) was invalid, the decision in G. R. No. L-14212 is hereby affirmed; but the decision in G. R. No. L-14757 is reversed and the case remanded to the court of first instance for further proceedings. Without costs.

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

[1] G. R. No. L-14837, Promulgated June 30, 1961.

[2] G. R. No. L-15483, Promulgated June 30, 1961.

[3] G. R. No. L-13940, Promulgated June 30, 1961.

[4] G. R. No. L-15015, Promulgated June 30, 1961.

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