

**ALFONSO T. YUCHENGCO, PETITIONER, VS. REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON GOOD GOVERNMENT, ESTATE OF FERDINAND E. MARCOS, PRIME HOLDINGS, INC., ESTATE OF RAM...**

*G.R. No. 131127. November 15, 2000*

Ponente: YNARES-SANTIAGO, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-131127/>

---

**YNARES-SANTIAGO, J.:**

The instant Motion for Reconsideration filed by private respondents is, in the main, a reiteration of issues which have already been considered and resolved by this Court.

In the assailed Decision dated June 8, 2000, this Court ordered the Sandiganbayan to determine the value of the properties sought to be recovered and petitioner to pay proper docket fees within thirty days (30) after their determination. The decretal portion states:

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the petition is partially GRANTED. The questioned Resolutions are SET ASIDE. Petitioner is ordered to submit to public respondent Sandiganbayan the value of the properties he seeks to recover and to pay the proper docket fees therefor within thirty (30) days upon determination thereof either by the Sandiganbayan or its clerk of court, which in turn is directed to act with dispatch on the matter.

SO ORDERED.

Respondents, in their motion for reconsideration, characterized this as an unfair and overly lenient accommodation. They contend that petitioner acted with deliberate bad faith since he knew or must have known the proper amount of docket fees but purposely did not pay them. We find that this argument is not supported by the records of this case.

When petitioner filed his motion and complaint-in-intervention on August 11, 1988,[1] the exact amount due as docket fees was not as clear as the private respondents portray it to be. The Sandiganbayan Law was not plain and explicit on the matter. It is subject to two interpretations, i.e., literal,[2] according to the words used, or liberal,[3] through implied amendment. Section 11 of P.D. No. 1606 expressly provides that "(a)ll proceedings in the Sandiganbayan shall be conducted at no cost to the complainant and/or his witnesses." The Sandiganbayan Law was later amended through an Executive Order of President Corazon C. Aquino in 1986, and by Congress through R.A. No. 7975, enacted in 1994, and R.A. No. 8429, enacted in 1997. The amendatory laws expanded the jurisdiction and increased the functions of the Sandiganbayan, but Section 11 of P.D. 1606, entitled, "Proceedings free of charge," was not changed. Thus, it was left to this Court to categorically rule whether parties filing civil actions before the Sandiganbayan are liable to pay the required docket fees.

This lack of precision is also apparent in the Revised Rules of the Sandiganbayan. Rule XXI thereof provides that "as far as practicable, the Rules of Court shall govern proceedings in the Sandiganbayan." Again, the alleged mandatory requirement on docket fees is sought to be inferred through mere reference to the Rules of Court. On

this score, petitioner argued that neither the Rules of Court nor the Sandiganbayan Rules can amend a statute by implication, or through what is discussed in this case as logical interpretative association.

Petitioner's uncertainty and doubt, and the absence of a willful intent to evade docket fees, are further manifested by his having formally asked the Sandiganbayan to determine the correct docket fees. When the Sandiganbayan held that P14,425.00 was the proper amount,[4] petitioner paid the same promptly, albeit without prejudice to any objections he may make with respect to the payment of any docket fees at all in this case.[5] It, therefore, turned out that it was not only petitioner but also the Sandiganbayan that was uncertain about the payment and amount of docket fees.

Petitioner later asked that if indeed docket fees are payable, they should constitute a lien on any judgment in his favor, or that he should be given a reasonable period to allege the amount and pay it. Far from showing bad faith as respondents allege, these acts are indicative of a bona fide willingness to pay the correct amount once it is determined.

There was no clear rule on the payment of docket fees before the Sandiganbayan in 1988. Since respondents' arguments on the non-availability of equitable considerations are based on the existence of a clear and unambiguous rule, said arguments have no merit.

The vacillating role of the Sandiganbayan, which led this Court to apply equitable considerations, has been discussed and determined in the Decision sought to be reconsidered.

When the complaint-in-intervention was filed on August 11, 1988, the amount of P400.00 was accepted as filing fee.[6] In a Resolution dated February 17, 1989, the Sandiganbayan admitted said complaint over public respondent's objections.[7] The Republic filed a motion for reconsideration, but this was denied.[8] The Republic and the PCGG filed their respective answers to the complaint-in-intervention. An amended complaint-in-intervention, impleading private respondents, was admitted on June 11, 1993 or five years after the original filing fee was paid.[9] Amended answers-in-intervention followed.

It was only on August 25, 1993 when respondents formally and strongly raised the jurisdictional issue of docket fees by way of a motion to dismiss the amended complaint-in-intervention.[10] A second amended complaint-in-intervention, an opposition to the motion to dismiss,[11] a reply to the opposition,[12] a rejoinder,[13] and a sur-rejoinder[14] followed. In all of these pleadings, the docket fee question was discussed. It was before the Sandiganbayan all the time.

The second amended complaint-in-intervention was again refiled on September 21, 1994.[15] It was opposed by Prime Holdings, Inc. and the Cojuangcos.[16] Petitioner pointed out that related issues surrounding the running of the 10-year prescriptive period called for the early resolution of the issue.[17] On March 31, 1995, petitioner asked for leave to file a bond to answer for any docket fees, as an alternative measure.[18]

On April 17, 1995, the Sandiganbayan resolved to defer its determination of correct filing fees until the trial of the case.[19] Petitioner went to the extent of raising the issue to the Supreme Court in G.R. No. 123264, where the petition was dismissed as premature.[20]

On March 29, 1996, the Sandiganbayan denied petitioner's motion to post bond and ordered him to pay an additional P14,425.00 for docket fees.[21] This was not taken lying down by respondents. For over a year, the issue continued to be debated in motion after motion and pleading after pleading, until the issuance of the assailed resolutions leading to the filing of the instant petition with this Court.

In light of the nine (9)-year history of the case before the Sandiganbayan, it cannot be asserted that the proper

amount of docket fees was clear and explicit from the start and that petitioner deliberately refused to pay the easily ascertained amount. Or that no uncertainty and doubt should be considered in favor of petitioner.

As can be seen from the proceedings in this case, the question of docket fees and the related issue of prescription were raised and pleaded before the Sandiganbayan. Petitioner asked for an early resolution of the docket fees controversy to keep prescription from coming up as an issue. The Sandiganbayan shelved the matter aside and left its determination until the trial proper.

There is, therefore, nothing new in the Motion for Reconsideration before this Court that has not been earlier discussed and resolved. Respondents failed to show any substantial error calling for the reconsideration of the decision.

WHEREFORE, respondents' motion for reconsideration is DENIED with FINALITY.

**SO ORDERED.**

Davide, Jr., C.J., (Chairman), Puno, Kapunan, and Pardo, JJ., concur.

---

[1] Rollo, p. 195.

[2] Pablo v. Hon. Castillo, G.R. No. 125108, August 3, 2000.

[3] Cosico, Jr. v. NLRC, 272 SCRA 583 (1997).

[4] Ibid., p. 406.

[5] Id., p. 414.

[6] Op. cit., note 1.

[7] Rollo, p. 211.

[8] Ibid., p. 216.

[9] Id., p. 238.

[10] Id., p. 239.

[11] Id., p. 264.

[12] Id., p. 291.

[13] Id., p. 310.

[14] Id., p. 324.

[15] Id., p. 341.

[16] Id., p. 355.

[17] Id., p. 360.

[18] Id., p. 367.

[19] Id., p. 371.

[20] Id., p. 110.

[21] Id., p. 406.

**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.