

**ALBERTO G. ROMULO, JOSE B. LAUREL, MARCELO B. FERNAN,
CECILIA MUÑOZ PALMA, EDMUNDO B. CEA, ANTONIO CUENCO,
HOMOBONO ADAZA, CIRIACO ALFELOR, ROLANDO ANDAYA,
HONORATO AQUINO, JOSE...**

G.R. No. 71908. February 04, 1986

Ponente: PATAJO, J.

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PATAJO, J.:

Petition for prohibition to restrain respondents from enforcing Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Batasan Rules of Procedure in Impeachment Proceedings and mandamus to compel the Batasan Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to recall from the archives and report out the resolution together with the verified complaint for the impeachment of the President of the Philippines.

Petitioners, representing more than one-fifth of all members of the Batasan, filed with the Batasan on August 13, 1985 Resolution No. 644 calling for the im-peachment of President Marcos together with a verified complaint for impeachment. Said resolution and com-plaint were referred by the Speaker to the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government. The Committee found the complaint not sufficient in form and substance to warrant its further consideration and disapproved Resolution No. 644 and dismissed all the charges contained in the complaint attached thereto on August 14, 1985. It then submitted its report which was duly noted by the Batasan and sent to the archives.

On August 14, 1985, MP Ramon V. Mitra filed with the Batasan a motion praying for the recall from the archives of Resolution No. 644 and the verified complaint attached thereto. Said motion was disapproved by the Batasan.

On September 7, 1985, the present petition was filed with this Court. In said petition, petitioners pray that after hearing this Court declare Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Batasan Rules on Impeachment which was approved by the Batasan on August 16, 1984 by a vote of 114 in favor and 58 against, unconstitutional, and Committee Report No. 154 of the Batasan Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government dismissing Resolution No. 644 and the complaint for impeachment attached thereto, null and void. They also pray that this Court issue a writ of preliminary injunction restraining respondents from enforcing and questioned provisions of the aforementioned Rules and a writ of preliminary mandatory injunction commanding the Batasan Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to recall from the archives and report out the resolution and complaint for impeachment in order that the impeachment trial can be conducted forthwith by the Batasan as a body.

In G.R. No. L-71688 filed on August 17, 1985, Arturo M. de Castro and Perfecto L. Cagampang, claiming to be members of good standing of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and taxpayers, filed a petition with this Court for certiorari to annul the resolution of the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government, the very same resolution subject of the present petition, dismissing the complaint for the impeachment of the President of the Philippines signed by the petitioners in the present case, and mandamus to compel said Committee on Justice and the Batasan, represented by its Speaker, to give due course to said com-plaint for impeachment. In denying

due course to said petition and dismissing outright the same, We held:

"1. The 1973 Constitution has vested in the Batasan Pambansa the exclusive power to initiate, try and decide all cases of impeachment. The action of the Committee on Justice of the Batasan to whom the complaint for the impeachment of the President had been referred dismissing said petition for being insufficient in form and substance involves a political question not cognizable by the Courts. The dismissal of said petition is within the ambit of the powers vested exclusively in the Batasan by express provision of Sec. 2, Article XIII of the Constitution and it is not within the competence of this Court to inquire whether in the exercise of said power the Batasan acted wisely. There is no allegation in the petition for certiorari that in the exercise of its powers the Batasan had violated any provision of the Constitution. The fact that the Committee on Justice dismissed the petition on the same day it was filed after deliberating on it for several hours as reported in the newspapers, radio and television (which must have been the basis of petitioners' claim that the Committee had acted with undue haste in unceremoniously dismissing the complaint for impeachment) does not provide basis for concluding that there had been a violation of any provision of the Constitution which would justify the Court's intervention to ensure proper observance of constitutional norms and conduct. Beyond saying that the Batasan may initiate impeachment by a vote of at least one-fifth of all its Members and that no official shall be convicted without the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all the members thereof, the Constitution says no more. It does not lay down the procedure to be followed in impeachment proceedings. It is up to the Batasan to enact its own rules of procedure in said impeachment proceedings, which it had already done. The interpretation and application of said rules are beyond the powers of the Court to review. The powers of the Batasan to dismiss a petition for impeachment which in its judgment it finds not meritorious or defective in form and substance are discretionary in nature and, therefore, not subject to judicial compulsion.

"2. The doctrine of separation of powers still exists under the 1973 Constitution though in a modified form made necessary because of the adoption of certain aspects of the parliamentary system in the amended 1973 Constitution. The major powers of the Government have been distributed by the Constitution to the President, who is the head of the State and chief executive of the Republic, the Batasan Pambansa and the Judiciary. Under the doctrine of separation of powers as interpreted by the decisions of this Court, mandamus will not lie from one branch of the government to a coordinate branch to compel performance of duties within the latter's sphere of responsibility. More specifically, this Court cannot issue a writ of mandamus against the Batasan to compel it to give due course to the complaint for impeachment."[1]

We did not dismiss outright the present petition as We did G.R. No. L-71688 but required respondents to comment thereto in view of the claim of petitioners that the provisions of the Rules of Procedure in Impeachment Proceedings, more specifically Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 pursuant to which the Batasan Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government had dismissed Resolution No. 644 and the complaint for the impeachment attached thereto are unconstitutional, implying thereby that the Batasan or the Committee thereof had, in the exercise of powers vested upon it by the Constitution, transgressed or violated the Constitution, certainly a justiciable question.

The provisions of the Rules of Procedure for Impeachment claimed by petitioners to be violative of the Constitution are the following:

"SEC. 4. Notice to Complainant and Respondent. - Upon due referral, the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government shall determine whether the complaint is sufficient in form and substance. If it finds that the complaint is not sufficient in form and substance, it shall dismiss the complaint and shall submit its report as provided hereunder. If it finds the complaint sufficient in form and substance, it shall furnish the respondent with copy of the resolution and verified complaint with advice that he may answer the complaint within fifteen (15) days from notice. The answer may include affirmative defenses. With leave of the Committee, the complainant may file a reply and the respondent, a rejoinder.

"SEC. 5. Submission of Evidence and Memoranda. - After receipt of pleadings provided for in Section 4, or the expiration of the time within which they may be filed, the Committee shall determine whether sufficient grounds for impeachment exist. If it finds that sufficient grounds for impeachment do not exist, the Committee shall dismiss the complaint and submit the report required hereunder. If the Committee finds that sufficient grounds for impeachment exist, the Committee shall require the parties to support their respective allegations by the submission of affidavits and counter-affidavits, including duly authenticated documents as may appear relevant. The Committee may, however, require that instead of affidavits and counter-affidavits, oral testimony shall be given. It may at all events examine and allow cross-examination of the parties and their witnesses.

"After the submission of evidence, the Committee may require the submission of memoranda, after which the matter shall be submitted for resolution.

"SEC. 6. Report and Recommendations. - The Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government shall submit a report of the Batasan containing its findings and recommendations within thirty (30) session days from submission of the case for resolution.

"If the Committee finds by a vote of majority of all its members that probable cause has been established it shall submit with its report a resolution setting forth the Articles of Impeachment on the basis of the evidence adduced before the Committee.

"If the Committee finds that probable cause has not been established, the complaint shall be dismissed subject to Section 9 of these Rules.

"SEC. 8. Vote Required for Trial. A majority vote of all the members of the Batasan is necessary for the approval of the resolution setting forth the Articles of Impeachment. If the resolution is approved by the required vote, it shall then be set for trial on the merits by the Batasan. On the other hand, should the resolution fail to secure approval by the required vote, the same shall result in the dismissal of the complaint for impeachment."

It is petitioners' contention that said provisions are unconstitutional because they amend Sec. 3 of Article XIII of the 1973 Constitution, without complying with the mandatory amendatory process provided for under Article XVI of the Constitution, by empowering a smaller body to supplant and overrule the complaint to impeach endorsed by the requisite 1/5 of all the members of the Batasan Pambansa and that said questioned provisions derail the impeachment proceedings at various stages by vesting the Committee on Justice, etc. the power to impeach or not to impeach, when such prerogative belongs solely to Batasan Pambansa as a collegiate body.

Petitioners further contend that Section 8 of the Rules is unconstitutional because it imposes an unconstitutional and illegal condition precedent in order that the complaint for impeachment can proceed to trial before the Batasan. By requiring a majority vote of all the members of the Batasan for the approval of the resolution setting forth the Articles of Impeachment, the Rules impose a condition not required by the Constitution for all that Section 3, Article XIII requires is the endorsement of at least one-fifth of all the members of the Batasan for the initiation of impeachment proceedings or for the impeachment trial to proceed.

It is the contention of the respondents Speaker Nicanor Yñiguez and the Members of the Committee on Justice of the Batasan Pambansa that the petition should be dismissed because (1) it is a suit against the Batasan itself over which this Court has no jurisdiction; (2) it raises questions which are political in nature; (3) the Impeachment Rules are strictly in consonance with the Constitution and even supposing without admitting that the Rules are invalid, their invalidity would not nullify the dismissal of the complaint for impeachment for the Batasan as a body sovereign within its own sphere has the power to dismiss the impeachment complaint even without the benefit of said Rules; and (4) the Court cannot by mandamus compel the Batasan to give due course to the impeachment complaint.

Respondent Renato L. Cayetano on the other hand contends that (1) the question involved is purely political; (2) the petitioners are not proper parties; (3) the petition is in reality a request for an advisory opinion made in the absence of an actual case or controversy; (4) prohibition and mandamus are not proper remedies, and (5) preliminary mandatory injunction is not proper; while respondent Salacnib P. Baterina contends that the petitioners lack standing to sue and impeachment is a power lodged exclusively in the Batasan.

A closer look at the substance than the form of the petition would reveal that resolution of the constitutionality of the questioned provisions of the Rules is not even necessary. What petitioners are really seeking is for this Court to compel the Batasan to proceed with the hearing on the impeachment of the President since more than one-fifth of all the members of the Batasan had filed a resolution for the impeachment of the President and the Batasan as a body is bound under the Constitution to conduct said trial and render judgment only after said trial and that the Committee on Justice has no authority to dismiss the complaint for impeachment on the ground that it is not sufficient in form and substance. Petitioners, therefore, ask that this Court order the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to recall from the Archives the Resolution No. 644 and the complaint for impeachment "in order that the impeachment trial can be conducted forthwith by the Batasan as a body." (Prayer of the Petition, subpar. (ii) of Par. 2).

The question squarely presented before this Court is therefore: Has this Court jurisdiction to order the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to recall from the Archives and report out the resolution and complaint for impeachment? Can this Court, assuming said resolution and complaint for impeachment are recalled from the Archives, order the Batasan to conduct a trial on the charges contained in said resolution and complaint for impeachment?

What is important to note is that when the Batasan denied the motion of MP Ramon Mitra for the recall from the Archives of Resolution No. 644 and the complaint for impeachment, it had in effect confirmed the action of the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government dismissing said resolution and complaint on impeachment. That the Batasan by even a majority vote can dismiss a complaint for impeachment cannot be seriously disputed. Since the Constitution expressly provides that "no official shall be convicted without the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all its members," a majority vote of all the members of the Batasan confirming the action of the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government disapproving the resolution calling for the impeachment of the President and dismissing all the charges contained in the complaint attached thereto, makes mathematically impossible the required at least two-thirds vote of all members of the Batasan to support a judgment of conviction. What purpose would be served by proceeding further when it is already obvious that the required two-thirds vote for conviction cannot be obtained? Dismissal of the impeachment proceedings would then be in order.

A dismissal by the Batasan itself as a body of the resolution and complaint for impeachment (which is what the denial by the Batasan of MP Mitra's motion to recall from the Archives said resolution and complaint for impeachment is tantamount to) makes irrelevant under what authority the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government had acted. The dismissal by the majority of the members of the Batasan of the impeachment proceedings is an act of the Batasan as a body in the exercise of powers that have been vested upon it by the Constitution beyond the power of this Court to review. This Court cannot compel the Batasan to conduct the impeachment trial prayed for by petitioners.

The fact that petitioners are asking that it is the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government, not the Batasan itself, which shall be commanded by this Court to recall from the Archives and report out the resolution and complaint for impeachment is of no moment. Aside from the fact that said Committee cannot recall from the Archives said resolution and complaint for impeachment without revoking or rescinding the action of the

Batasan denying MP Mitra's motion for recall (which of course it had no authority to do and, therefore, said Committee is in no position to comply with any order from this Court for said recall) such an order addressed to the Committee would actually be a direct order to the Batasan itself. Such in effect was the ruling in *Alejandrino vs. Quezon*, 46 Phil. 83, where this Court said:

"It is intimated rather faintly that, conceding all that is said with reference to the right of the Supreme Court to issue mandamus directed to the Philippine Senate, yet we would be justified in having our mandate run not against the Philippine Senate or against the President of the Philippine Senate and his fellow Senators but against the secretary, the sergeant-at-arms, the disbursing officer of the Senate. But this begs the question. If we have no authority to control the Philippine Senate, we have no authority to control the actions of subordinate employees acting under the direction of the Senate. The secretary, sergeant-at-arms, and disbursing officer of the Senate are mere agents of the Senate who cannot act independently of the will of that body. Should the Court do as requested, we might have the spectacle presented of the court ordering the secretary, the sergeant-at-arms, and the disbursing officer of the Philippine Senate to do one thing, and the Philippine Senate ordering them to do another thing. The writ of mandamus should not be granted unless it clearly appears that the person to whom it is directed has the absolute power to execute it. (*Turnbull vs. Giddings* [1893], 95 Mich. 314; *Abueva vs. Wood*, supra.) (On page 94).

See also *Abueva vs. Wood*, 45 Phil. 612, 636, where the Court said:

"x x x While it has been decided in many cases that the courts will not interfere with the legislative department of the government in the performance of its duties, does that rule apply to the committees duly appointed by the legislative department of the government and its officers? The powers and duties conferred upon said committee by the Legislature granting the legality of the object and purpose of said committee, and granting that the Legislature itself had the power to do and to perform the duties imposed upon said committee, then an interference by the courts with the performance of those duties by it would be tantamount to interfering with the workings and operations of the legislative branch of the government itself. An interference by the judicial department of the government with the workings and operations of the committee of the legislative department would be tantamount to an interference with the workings and operations of the legislative department itself. And, again, we are called upon to say, that one branch of the government cannot encroach upon the domain of another without danger. The safety of our institutions depends in no small degree on a strict observance of this salutary rule. (*Sinking Fund Cases*, 99 U.S., 700, 718; *Clough vs. Curtis*, 134 U.S., 361, 371; *Wise vs. Bigger*, 79 Va., 269)."

Moreover, while in their petition petitioners merely asked for a writ of preliminary mandatory injunction "commanding the Batasan Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to recall from the Archives and report out subject resolution and verified complaint for the impeachment of President Ferdinand E. Marcos," their ultimate objective is to have the Batasan as a body proceed with the impeachment trial. Recall of the resolution and complaint for impeachment would be meaningless unless the Batasan can also be compelled to conduct the impeachment trial.

For this Court to issue a writ of mandamus to the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government, would be but an empty and meaningless gesture unless it would also order the Batasan to proceed to try the impeachment proceedings. This, of course, the Court cannot do. Quoting Judge Cooley in *Sutherland vs. Governor of Michigan*, 29 Mich. 320:

"x x x in a case where jurisdiction is involved, no doubt it is not consistent with the dignity of the court to pronounce judgments which may be disregarded with impunity. x x x"

The admonition of *Alejandrino vs. Quezon*, supra, is of much relevance:

"x x x But certainly mandamus should never issue from this court where it will not prove to be effective and

beneficial. It should not be awarded where it will create discord and confusion. It should not be awarded where mischievous consequences are likely to follow. Judgment should not be pronounced which might possibly lead to unseemly conflicts or which might be dis-regarded with impunity. This court should offer no means by a decision for any possible collision between it as the highest court in the Philippines and the Philippine Senate as a branch of a coordinate department, or between the Court and the Chief Executive or the Chief Executive and the Legislature." (On page 95).

In any event, We find no basis for the contention of petitioners that Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the Rules of Procedure in Impeachment are violative of the provisions of the Constitution on Impeachment. As We said in *Arturo de Castro vs. Committee on Justice, et al.* (G.R. No. L-71688), "beyond saying that the Batasan may initiate impeachment by a vote of at least one-fifth of all its members and that no official shall be convicted without the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all the members thereof, the Constitution says no more." The Batasan pursuant to its power to adopt rules of its proceedings (Article VIII, Sec. 8(3), may adopt, as it did adopt, necessary rules of procedure to govern impeachment proceedings. The rules it adopted providing for dismissal of a complaint for impeachment which is not sufficient in form or substance, or when sufficient grounds for impeachment do not exist, or probable cause has not been established, or requiring a majority vote of all members of the Batasan for the approval of the resolution setting forth the Articles of Impeachment, are not inconsistent with the provision of Section 3 of Article XIII of the 1973 Constitution.

More specifically, the provision requiring con-currence of at least two-thirds votes of all members of the Batasan for conviction is not violated by any provision of the Rules which authorizes dismissal of a petition by a majority vote of the Batasan since with such number of votes it is obvious that the two-thirds vote of all members necessary for conviction can no longer be obtained. Such being the case, the Batasan can specify in its rules how and when the impeachment proceedings can be terminated or dismissed for Section 3, Article XIII merely provides for how a judgment of conviction can be sustained but is silent on how a complaint for impeachment can be dismissed when it becomes apparent that a judgment of conviction by the required number of votes is not possible.

Neither is the Constitutional provision to the effect that impeachment may be initiated by a vote of at least one-fifth of the members violated by the provision of the Rules authorizing the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government to dismiss the complaint for impeachment which it finds not sufficient in form and substance (Sec. 4), does not have sufficient grounds for impeachment (Sec. 5), or where probable cause has not been established (Sec. 6). All of said actions of the Committee refer to the disposition of a complaint for impeachment initiated by at least one-fifth of all the members of the Batasan. Their purpose is to determine whether or not a complaint for impeachment initiated by the required number of members of the Batasan warrants being referred to the Batasan for trial. They are not properly part of the "initiation phase" of the impeachment proceeding but of the "trial phase," or more accurately the "preparatory to trial" phase. Such actions are liken to actions taken by this Court in determining whether a petition duly filed should be given due course or should be dismissed outright.

While the Batasan has assigned to the Committee on Justice, Human Rights and Good Government the task of determining whether the petition is sufficient in form or substance, or that sufficient ground for impeachment exist or that probable cause has been established, said Committee is required to submit its report to the Batasan which has the ultimate decision whether to approve or disapprove said report. If the Batasan approves the Committee report dismiss-ing the complaint, said report is noted by the Batasan and sent to the Archives.

That the Rules on Impeachment of the Interim Batasan in the judgment of petitioners is better is no argument against the validity or constitutionality of the Rules on Impeachment approved by the Batasan. More importantly,

said Rules are always within the power of the Batasan to modify, change or replace any time. They do not have the force of law but are merely in the nature of by-laws prescribed for the orderly and convenient conduct of proceedings before the Batasan. They are merely procedural and not substantive (43 C.J. 527). They may be waived or disregarded by the Batasan and with their observance the Courts have no concern. (South Georgia Power Co. vs. Baumann, 169 Ga. 649; 151 SE 513). As the Court said in State vs. Alt, 26 Mo. A. 673, quoted in 46 C.J. 1383 Note 31:

"The rules of public deliberative bodies, whether codified in the form of 'manual,' and formally adopted by the body, or whether consisting of a body of unwritten customs or usages, preserved in memory and by tradition, are matters of which the judicial courts, as a general rule, take no cognizance. It is a principle of the common law of England that the judicial courts have no cognizance of what is termed the *lex et consuetudo parliamenti*. ... And, although this doctrine is not acceded to, in this country, to the extent to which it has gone in England, where the judicial courts have held that they possess no jurisdiction to judge of the powers of the House of Parliament, yet no authority is cited to us, and we do not believe that respectable judicial authority exists, for the proposition that the judicial courts have power to compel legislative, or quasi-legislative bodies to proceed in the conduct of their deliberations, or in the exercise of their powers, in accordance with their own rules. If the Congress of the United States disregards the constitution of the United States, or, if the legislature of one of the states disregards the constitution of the state, or of the United States, the power resides in the judicial courts to declare its enactments void. If an inferior quasi-legislative body, such as the council of a municipal corporation, disregards its own organic law, that is, the charter of the corporation, the judicial courts, for equal, if not for stronger, reasons, possess the same power of annulling its ordinances. But we are not aware of any judicial authority, or of any legal which will authorize the judicial courts to annul an act of the legislature, or an ordinance of municipal council merely, because one or the other was enacted in disregard of the rules which the legislature, or the municipal council, or either house thereof, had prescribed for its own government."

To the same effect is 67 Corpus Juris Secundum, 870, where it was said:

"Rules of parliamentary practice are merely procedural and not substantive. The rules of procedure adopted by deliberative bodies have not the force of a public law, but they are merely in the nature of by-laws, prescribed for the orderly and convenient conduct of their own proceedings. The rules adopted by deliberative bodies are subject to revocation, modification, or waiver at the pleasure of the body adopting them. Where a deliberative body adopts rules of order for its parliamentary governance, the fact that it violates one of the rules so adopted may not invalidate a measure passed in compliance with statute. The rules of procedure passed by one legislative body are not binding on a subsequent legislative body operating within the same jurisdiction, and, where a body resolves that the rules of a prior body be adopted until a committee reports rules, the prior rules cease to be in force on the report of the committee. It may be of assistance, in determining the effect of parliamentary law, to consider the nature of the particular deliberative body."

Finally, in the present case, injunction to restrain the enforcement of the particular provisions of the Rules will not lie (aside from the fact that the question involved is political) because the acts of the Committee sought to be restrained have already been consummated. They are *fait accompli*. Prohibition or injunction would not issue to restrain acts already performed or consummated. *Remonte vs. Banto*, 16 SCRA 257; *Aragones vs. Subido*, 25 SCRA 95.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, judgment is hereby rendered DISMISSING the petition for lack of merit, without pronouncement as to costs.

SO ORDERED.

Aquino, C.J., Concepcion, Jr., Melencio-Herrera, Plana, Escolin, Gutierrez, Jr., De La Fuente, Cuevas, and Alampay, JJ., concur.

Teehankee, J., see statement.

Abad Santos, JJ., reserves his vote.

TEEHANKEE, J.:

I reserve my vote. It may be observed, though, that this is one petition that, following the Court's customary disposition, may well be dismissed for having become moot and academic, in view of the expiration of the term of the incumbent President upon the holding of the presidential elections scheduled on February 7, 1986, in which the charges brought in the impeachment resolution and verified complaint may be duly submitted to the people for their proper consideration and judgment.

[1] Resolution promulgated September 3, 1985.

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