

APÉNDICE

REMARKS

OF

Hon. TOMAS CONFESOR

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 14, 1927

Mr. CONFESOR. Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of the House: Less than thirty days remain of the present and last session of the seventh legislature. Then, it will become a matter of history and the people as well as future generation will have the opportunity to judge the accomplishments and records of this body and its individual members. At this very juncture, therefore, when we have just a few months ahead of the time when we shall again face the people to give an accounting as to how we have comported with our duties and responsibilities and to lay before them the affairs to the nation, I deem it my duty to present before this body certain facts and figures and at the same time expose before the country the methods and procedure as well as the processes and influences that affect, guide, and shape the affairs of the nation in legislation and administration.

First of all, when each and every one of us, entered the halls of this assembly for the first time, we were imbued with high ideals of service, armed with great ideas and propositions of curing the ills of the country in general, and allaying the burdens of our respective districts in particular, as well as to give force and effect to their desires and aspirations. We came in full of hope, fresh with the inspiration of popular confidence and burning with the fire of enthusiasm.

Then, we entered upon our task. We began to give due expression and form to the agitations and anxieties of our souls and the mandates of our respective districts. The people know and are aware that the expenditures of the Nation are year by year growing and rising in enormous proportions. They are not ignorant that in 1917, the Senate had an appropriation of ₱228,410 for salaries and wages and in 1925, ₱407,572; that for the same item the House of Representatives in 1916 paid ₱290,070.87 and in 1925, ₱799,683; that the Executive in 1916, paid ₱120,598 and in 1925, ₱362,043, etc. In other words, for salaries and wages the tide never recedes but continues to rise. Just five years ago, the total for salaries and wages was ₱24,150,432. Now it is ₱26,781,456 showing an increase of over ₱2,000,000 inside five years.

You realize, however, that whenever the Committee on Appropriations set itself upon the job to get into the root of the matter by investigating the functioning of the Government with a view to bring

good economy in its administration and operation, it encountered immediately a stonewall intrenching an all-absorbing and all-powerful bureaucracy and private interest.

More than this, you have learned of extravagancies, of wastes and negligence, resulting in losses of great magnitude but whenever an effort is put forth to trace the sources and root of the evil, you are struck with bewilderment and become confused through the intricate system of this dominant bureaucracy and influence of private interest.

You have then come to the realization that the forces and influences that shape legislation and policies are not that of the popular will through their representatives assembled in open and public discussion but by the dangerous and obnoxious system of bureaucracy and secret conferences. *Decisions and determinations* on momentous questions of policy and government are decided in secret, behind closed doors beyond the reach of public view and of public knowledge.

Let me call your attention to the following facts:

The Fiber Standardization Board for the twelve months beginning July 1, 1926, to June 30, 1927, spent over ₱150,000 while in 1924 the division in charge of fiber classification and inspection in the Bureau of Agriculture, carried just an appropriation of ₱89,580.

The Metropolitan Water System, after its separation from the City of Manila, is costing more yearly. During the last five years, the total cost of administration of the system was ₱2,585,505 while five years prior to its transfer, the total sum for the same item was ₱1,485,505. In other words, the system spends ₱200,000 more each year for administration as compared with that when the waterworks was in the hands of the city.

For the annual repairs and operation of coast-guards the outlay is no less than ₱150,000 annually. At the same time, the coast-guard service is very deficient and unsatisfactory. With new boats this figure could be reduced to ₱75,000, effecting an economy of ₱75,000 yearly at least. And at the same time, the country would enjoy good and satisfactory service.

For a long time and until now, ₱350,000 is paid annually for rentals of buildings occupied by Government offices. During the last ten years, we have paid for just that item ₱3,500,000.

Let us pass on to the arrastre of the Manila Customhouse. It has been turned over to a private concern because the Collector of Customs confessed that the Government cannot efficiently and economically undertake the work. When as a matter of fact the arrastre rendered a profit of ₱184,458.37 the year before it was handed over to the Manila Terminal Co. For that privilege, the Government

shares 5 per cent of the gross receipts of that private entity.

For the last four years and a half the participation of the Government at that rate totalled ₱136,452.67. In other words, the gross receipts of the Manila Terminal Company reached the sum of ₱2,729,053.40, giving an average annual gross receipt of ₱606,456.31. In 1919, the total expenditures of the arrastre of the Customhouse was ₱357,926; in 1920, ₱443,324; in 1921, ₱308,628; the year previous to the turning over of the arrastre of the Customhouse to the Manila Terminal Company. These figures give an annual average expenditure for the arrastre of ₱369,959. The Government by turning over the arrastre to the Manila Terminal Company has been losing, therefore, yearly, an average of ₱236,497 or ₱1,182,485 during the last five years.

These are not all. Here comes another array of cold facts and figures. They represent the losses of the Government by defalcations by public officers of funds entrusted in their care, administration and safe-keeping. You will be surprised to learn that during the last ten years and a half ₱1,471,957 of the people's money was lost by defalcations. In other words, almost ₱150,000 of public funds find their way yearly into the hands of unworthy and unfaithful public servants. What measures have been or are being taken to avoid such a tremendous annual loss? None that I know of.

The facts and figures, therefore, show that on account of the alienation and renunciation of the Legislature of certain of its powers, of the Government confessing its incapacity to efficiently administer its arrastre service, its fear of certain individuals like Mr. Gideon, who by threatening to resign from the Metropolitan Water System succeeded in getting a raise from ₱12,000 to ₱15,000 in salary, and by the indifference, if not the impotence, of the Legislature, the Government suffers no less than ₱1,000,000 of loss annually.

Yet the administration recommends more and greater taxation!

Why has not the Legislature looked into these cracks and holes through which leak and disappear public funds and the people's money?

The people are entitled to an unmistakable answer to this question now when the sacred name of *patriotism* is invoked every hour of the twenty-four hours of the day. This question should be answered now when the press publicly makes the charge that there exists a coalition between certain private interests and a group of legislators to push through the amendment of the Coastwise Law.

For the sake of public decency the question and the charge should be answered.

And why not say it here that bureaucracy and private interests have the Legislature and the Government more or less in the hollow of their hands. How many times have we seen measures pigeon-holed because they were strongly objected to by a bureau chief or a department secretary?

And how many good bills have been buried in Committee rooms because the indirect veto power of a bureau director hangs over them?

You have no chance against him. The legislator is not even given a hearing before the powers that

be, but the bureau chief or department secretary, yes. Their words are final.

When certain measures affect certain private interests, you should look out. You must be very careful unless you step in somebody's toes.

Take the labor compensation bill. Even after all sides to the question have been given a hearing and their objections met, still we read of a threat that unless rendered absolutely ineffectual for its purpose, private interest will fight it in the office of the Governor-General.

In this burning issue of the amendment to the Shipping Law, we are witnessing the struggle of forces, known and unknown. We are witnessing a fight in the open and within the sanctum of many offices, public and otherwise.

What does all this mean and what relation has it to do with the facts and figures, I have presented here?

It is simply this, that the Legislature should not go to the Metropolitan Water System because an all powerful individual is therein; that the Legislature should not meddle with the funds of the Fiber Standardization Board because influential marchants are therein; that the Legislature should not touch the Bureau of Customs, the Manila Harbor Board, and the Manila Terminal in charge of the *arrastre*, because it would be stepping on the feet of certain influential personages therein. We should not appropriate money for the purchase of new coastguard vessels, because a certain Government official has said that there are no funds, and his words are final. Yet ₱150,000, goes to waste every year for the repairs and maintenance of the inefficient and almost unserviceable coast-guards. I wonder whether this House would like me to cite certain specific cases to demonstrate the power of private interest and of bureaucracy.

You would recall that there was a time when the Binalbagan Central was for sale. A certain influential Chinese merchant offered an option, and he was required to deposit ₱25,000 for that. The sale was not consummated. The merchant could not meet the terms of the bank. What happened to the ₱25,000? Was it confiscated by the bank, as it was the purpose for requiring the deposit of ₱25,000? No, it was returned to him in cold cash. Now, gentlemen of the House, this is only a single instance of the influence of private and influential person in the affairs of the Government.

Sr. MENDOZA. Para algunas preguntas al orador. Mr. CONFESOR. Just a minute, I have more facts yet.

(Continuing.) Everybody, all the world, knows and has heard of a certain gentleman by the name of Alindogan. Alindogan! Speak to the people of Manila, speak to the personnel of the Customhouse. This name is law. He has the contract for the transportation of baggages of Chinese coming from China landing in Manila.

But that is not the serious thing, Mr. Speaker. The worst aspect of the matter is this: That he is at the same time a special agent of the Collector of Customs—a special designation without salary. What does it mean, Mr. Speaker? I understand, furthermore, that his influence goes beyond the administration of the Customhouse. It goes farther

than that. The reach and weight of his influence penetrates even into the higher offices of the Government. You see, Mr. Speaker, the influence of private interests into the administration of the affairs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, just one more fact and then I will be through. The Committee on Appropriations would recall that during the consideration of that bill in the Committee I raised the question as to the fund from which the cost of the repairs of the coastguard *Mindoro* would be drawn. According to certain reliable information, the total amount of the items of expenditure for the repairs of the coastguard has reached the sum of ₱30,000 while the contract price for said repairs was only ₱19,000. I wrote to the manager of the dock which made the repairs. He came to my office and told me that they were preparing an itemized statement of the expenses and asked me if I could wait for a few days and the information would be ready. I thank the gentleman.

After two or three weeks the list did not come. The itemized statement of expenses was not available. I wrote to him again. That was a month ago. In answer to my letter, he said, that it has been referred to the Collector of Customs. For, the collector had the itemized list of expenses. More than a month has now elapsed, Mr. Speaker, but up to this time, the Collector of Customs has not furnished that list—the itemized list of expenses—with respect to the total expenses involved in the repairs of the *Mindoro*.

What is the issue, then, Mr. Speaker? The need of the hour is for a courageous, constructive, and patriotic leadership that would inspire this Legislature to assert its powers and prerogatives to save the Government, at least, one million pesos every year. Such a leadership now would be rendering real patriotic service to the country.

Mr. MARCOS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield for some questions?

The SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. The gentleman may yield if he so desires.

Mr. CONFESOR. With pleasure.

Mr. MARCOS. The gentleman from Iloilo has mentioned during his speech so many exorbitant expenses that are being incurred by the Government. Is he not aware of the fact that we have already discussed the Appropriation Bill?

Mr. CONFESOR. What difference does that make?

Mr. MARCOS. So the gentleman does not understand the difference?

Mr. CONFESOR. What I mean is this. What difference could there be in discussing those facts and figures if they were not discussed at that time when the Appropriation Bill was taken up?

Mr. MARCOS. There is a great difference, gentleman from Iloilo.

Mr. CONFESOR. It is the duty of each and every one of us here to speak clearly and frankly whenever there is an opportunity.

Mr. MARCOS. Do you mean to say that you did not have any opportunity of giving the same information to the House when we discussed the Appropriation Bill? In fact, you spoke against some items of the Appropriation Bill.

Mr. CONFESOR. The gentleman from Ilocos Norte can consult the records as to my stand on this matter.

Mr. MARCOS. This is my point, gentleman from Iloilo. You spoke against the Appropriation Bill in the House of Representatives.

Mr. CONFESOR. I did against certain items.

Mr. MARCOS. All right, let us limit ourselves to the salaries of the employees of the House Representatives. I opposed that item when we discussed the Appropriation Bill. My question is, did you have any objection to that item presented in the Committee on Appropriations of which you are a member?

Mr. CONFESOR. I congratulate you for your speech.

Mr. MARCOS. This is my point. Did you speak against those items in the Committee on Appropriations? Because I would like to make you understand that I was the only one who spoke against it on the floor of the House. When I combated that bill you did not say anything, and now you come here and speak against the Appropriation Bill. This is not the proper time to speak against it. The most opportune time is over.

Mr. CONFESOR. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to rob the gentleman from Ilocos Norte of the honor of having attacked that item of the Appropriation Bill. He has all my admiration and congratulation for what he did.

Mr. MARCOS. All right, so much with that, gentleman from Iloilo.

The SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. The gentleman from Iloilo has only two minutes more to finish his remarks.

Mr. MARCOS. Mr. Speaker, I would request that the time of the gentleman from Iloilo be extended five minutes more so that he can answer my questions.

The SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE. Is there any objection on the part of the House? (*Silence.*) The Chair hears none. The time of the gentleman is extended five minutes longer.

Mr. MARCOS. You spoke of the defalcation from which the Government is suffering.

The gentleman from Iloilo has said that, according to statistics, the Government has been suffering for several years by defalcations which have cost the Government about ₱350,000. I understand the gentleman from Iloilo has been a member of this august body for six years. Why did he acquiesce to this "robbery" for six years? If he is a very distinguished member of this body, why did he allow, I repeat, such a situation to continue uncorrected?

Mr. CONFESOR. I invite you now to cooperate with me to clean up the system.

Mr. MARCOS. It is now too late to discuss the Appropriation Bill, and who knows if we shall come back here. What is the use of wailing over the dead. Oh, that you did not die! But why did you not apply the medicine when he was still living?

Mr. CONFESOR. The gentleman from Ilocos Norte seems to ignore the fact that the Appropriation Bill is still pending consideration by the Legislature.

It has not been acted upon by the Senate. It has to come back to the House.

Mr. MARCOS. Do I understand that the Appropriation Bill comes back to the House or does it go to the Conference Committee for decision?

Mr. CONFESOR. No, sir; it has to come back to the House for decision.

Mr. MARCOS. And, gentleman from Iloilo, as I understand, it comes back to the House; and we discuss those items on which we do not agree. But we shall not go over the whole Appropriation Bill.

Mr. CONFESOR. But we do not know what would be the objections of the Senate.

Mr. MARCOS. So you mean to say that you are not aware of the items objected to by the Senate? Now, here comes again my question: You have been criticizing the practice of agreeing upon things behind doors, did you not?

Mr. CONFESOR. Gentleman from Ilocos Norte, I have been criticizing that for a long, long time.

Mr. MARCOS. But here is my point. For three years I have been with you, and whenever we go to the caucus meeting you go outside satisfied. So how could this be? I would appreciate you more if you made opposition at the caucus meeting and then continued to oppose it on the floor. Can you explain your flagrant inconsistency?

Mr. CONFESOR. Even admitting that I did not say anything, the caucus is not the place where to dis-

cuss and decide public questions. Public questions should be decided before the eyes of the people. But as to your assertion that in the caucus meeting I have never said anything, I would like the gentleman from Ilocos Norte to search his memory again.

Mr. MARCOS. Gentleman from Iloilo, I am sure that my memory is serving me well now, and I will say that you have gone there, yet you have not opposed anything; and then you come here and criticize the party.

Mr. CONFESOR. I do not criticize the party.

Mr. MARCOS. Furthermore, you say that bureau chiefs are the ones killing the measures and all that. My point is this: Have you ever tried to remedy the situation? Did you propose any amendment to the present law in order to protect our prestige as constituted representatives of the people?

Mr. CONFESOR. I believe the question should be changed this way: Instead of "have you," it should be "have we."

Mr. MARCOS. But the question is, you are the one that remembers it; but why have you not done it?

Mr. CONFESOR. I invite you now to join me to work for the reform of the system.

Mr. MARCOS. Well, I will expect the gentleman from Iloilo to present an amendment, and I will be with him as long as it is feasible and practicable.

Mr. CONFESOR. I thank you.