

Unburdening the President's office

IN view of President Marcos' decision to change the nature of the Office of the President, it is interesting to note what the Reorganization Commission headed by Armand Fabella said about the matter in its report in 1972.

The first item of the report stated: The Office of the President shall be freed as much as possible from unnecessary detail by reducing the number of agencies reporting directly to the President—through abolition, merger or transfer, and by decreasing the routine or minor items now requiring approval by the President personally or the Executive Secretary.

As a general rule, only those agencies which meet any of the following criteria shall be retained in the Office of the President:

- a. the agency is a purely advisory or consultative body to the President;
- b. the agency provides staff assistance to the President;
- c. the functions of the agency involve several departments or entities; or
- d. the functions of the agency require the personal attention of the President.

In every case, the criteria shall apply to agencies operating at a level of importance that merits the attention of the President.

ATER, the report says: It is recommended that the Office of the Office of the President must continue to be fully responsive to the specific needs and requirements of the Pres-

ident, and therefore he shall have complete authority to reorganize the various functions and units of the Executive Office to meet the exigencies of the service, and to abolish and create as many positions as may be necessary including those of assistant executive secretaries and presidential assistants; provided that incumbent personnel who belong to the career service in the Executive Office shall not be reduced in rank, decreased in salary or dismissed except for cause, as a result of any such reorganization; provided, further, that any such reorganization shall be undertaken within the limits of available appropriations and subject to civil service laws and rules.

HE report also notes: There are at present 16 agencies (as of 1972) under the administrative supervision of the Office of the President.

The Office is now overburdened with many referrals and other routine matters, a situation stemming largely from the proliferation of agencies reporting directly to the President and the many matters requiring presidential approval under existing laws and rules.

In the past, many agencies had preferred to be under the Office of the President since that Office had neither the staff nor the capability to monitor these agencies, much less supervise them.

Decentralization is necessary to free the Office of such detail to enable it to concentrate on policy formulation and decision-making on the more substantial issues.

Consolidating the funds

THE President through Letter of Implementation No. 29 dated Dec. 5, 1975, directed the Budget Commission to take over some budgetary functions formerly referred to the defunct office of the executive secretary. This followed Letter of Implementation No. 28 placing the commission under the Office of the President.

The President directed Budget Commissioner Jaime C. Laya "to take final action on the following budgetary matters":

- 1. Approval of lump sum appropriations under Section 7-1(4), Commonwealth Act No. 246, as amended, through special budgets; provided that: (a) in each instance, the total amount approved does not exceed the amount authorized in the approved program of expenditure, and (b) releases of funds are subject to other limitations as the President may impose;
- 2. Use of savings under the Special and General Provisions of the General Appropriations Decree; provided that: (a) the total expenditure ceiling of the individual agency is not exceeded; (b) savings are used only for non-recurring expenditures; and (c) purposes are not for those requiring Presidential approval;
- 3. Augmentation of fund appropriations items used within a department/agency; provided that funds used are obtained from other authorized programs of the same department/agency, subject to guidelines on percentage limits as provided by law or as may be prescribed by the President;
- 4. Release of funds for optional retirement gratuities under Republic Act 1616, as amended; provided it is within the approved program of expenditure and subject to existing policies as are or may be prescribed;
- 5. Approval of requests for exemption from Memorandum Circular No. 593 dated Aug. 8, 1972, of the Office of the President, relative to: a) authorizing expenditures in connection with attendance in meetings, seminars, workshops, conventions, or the like; b) filling

of vacant positions; and c) purchase of necessary and essential furniture and office equipment, subject to guidelines prepared by the Budget Commission and approved by the President; and

6. Payment of overtime compensation under Section 7-1(32) of CA. No. 246, as amended, subject to guidelines prepared by the commission and approved by the President.

The budget commissioner is to submit to the President a regular monthly report of these actions taken.

It was also stated that nothing in the delegation of authority shall be construed as a limitation to the power of the President to review or overrule any action taken by the budget commissioner.

THE President on Dec. 11 ordered the abolition of 10 agencies and the transfer of 34 others from the Office of the President to other government agencies.

The order, in Letters of Implementation Nos. 30 to 34, instructed abolition of the following:

- 1. Board of Visitors on Education;
- 2. Joint Committee on Financial Management Improvement;
- 3. Philippine-Japan Joint Commission;
- 4. Peace and Order Coordinating Council;
- 5. Philippine National Committee on Freedom from Hunger Campaign;
- 6. Social Defense Planning Committee;
- 7. Presidential Census Coordinating Board;
- 8. Congressional Accounts Liquidation Office;
- 9. Complaints and Investigation Office;
- 10. Board of Liquidators.

However, the functions of the Board of Liquidators, including applicable appropriations, records, equipment, property, and personnel, are transferred to the Department of General Services or its successor agency, the General Service Administration.

AGENCIES ordered transferred from the Office of the President to other agencies or departments are:

- 1. Inter-Agency Task Force to the National Housing Authority. The transfer includes applicable appropriations, records, equipment, property, and personnel.
- 2. Philippine Amanah Bank, Philippine Guarantee Corp., and the Fiscal Loan Guarantee Corp., and the Fiscal Incentives Review Board to the Department of Finance.
- 3. Typhoon Moderation Research and Development Council, PAGASA to the Department of National Defense. The transfer also includes applicable appropriations, records, equipment, property, and personnel.
- 4. National Computer Center to the Department of National Defense.
- 5. Committee on State Visits to the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- 6. Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, National Electrification Administration, Farm Systems Dev-

elopment Corp., Manila Transit Corp., Philippine National Railways, Philippine Ports Authority, National Housing Authority, Local Water Utilities Administration, National Power Corp., and Philippine Aerospace Development Corp. to the Department of Public Works, Transportation and Communications.

7. Maritime Industry Authority and Power Development Council to the Department of Public Works, Transportation and Communications.

8. Pasig River Development Council to the Department of Public Works, Transportation and Communications.

9. Development Academy of the Philippines to the Civil Service Commission.

10. Philippine-Australian Development Assistance Program (PADAP) to the Department of Public Works, and the DPH shall be assisted by the inter-agency technical staff created under Memorandum Order No. 455, promulgated Sept. 23, 1973. The transfer also includes appropriations, records, equipment, property and personnel of the administration.

11. Export Processing Zone Authority and National Development Co. to the Department of Industry.

12. Leyte Sab-A Basic Development Authority, the Southern Philippines Development Administration, and the Special Committee on Scholarships to the National Economic and Development Authority.

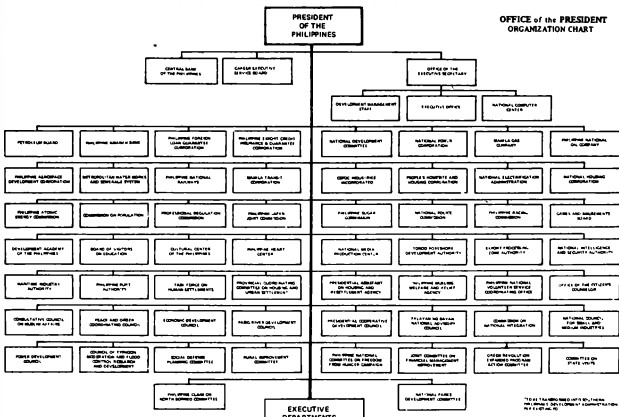
13. Palayan ng Bayan National Advisory Council and Presidential Committee on Agricultural Credit to the Department of Agriculture.

14. Philippine Sugar Commission (when it is activated) and the Green Revolution Expanded Program Action Committee to the Department of Agriculture.

15. Commission on Population and National Nutrition Council to the Department of Health.

OF the 11 agencies abolished, three will remain in operation until the completion of their tasks, after which their abolition shall take effect.

- 1) Presidential Census Coordinating Board upon the completion of the 1975 economic census.
- 2) The Congressional Accounts Liquidation Office, until the completion of its task.
- 3) The Complaints and Investigation Office upon the creation of the *Tanod-bayan* pursuant to the new Constitution.



THE AGENCIES attached to the Office of the President as of last month.