

CHANROBLES PUBLISHING COMPANY

**SUPREME COURT  
SECOND DIVISION**

**GENARO BAUTISTA,  
*Petitioner,***

***-versus-***

**G.R. No. 123375  
February 28, 2005**

**HON. COURT OF APPEALS and  
THE OFFICIALS AND BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS OF KAISAHAN AT  
KAPATIRAN NG MGA  
MANGGAGAWA AT KAWANI SA  
METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS  
AND SEWERAGE SYSTEM  
UNION, REPRESENTED BY ITS  
PRESIDENT, PRUDENCIO CRUZ,  
*Respondents.***

X-----X

**DECISION**

**CHICO-NAZARIO, J.:**

Before us is a Petition for Review on *Certiorari* under Rule 45 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure, assailing the Decision<sup>[1]</sup> and Resolution<sup>[2]</sup> of the Court of Appeals, dated 09 October 1995 and 08 January 1996, respectively. The court *a quo*, in said Decision, held that the jurisdiction to determine the proper representative of

employees in the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System pertains to the Department of Labor and Employment, more particularly to the Bureau of Labor Relations.

### **The Facts**

On 07 May 1993, after a petition for election of officers of Kaisahan at Kapatiran ng mga Manggagawa at Kawani sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (KKMK-MWSS) was filed by Bonifacio De Guzman, former auditor of KKMK-MWSS, a Resolution was issued by Perlita Bathan-Velasco, in her capacity as Director of the Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR), the decretal portion of which states:

Wherefore, the instant petition is hereby granted and the Kaisahan at Kapatiran ng mga Manggagawa at Kawani sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (KKMK-MWSS) is hereby directed to immediately conduct an election of the following union officers: 1. President, 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, 3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, 4. Executive Secretary, 5. Assistant Executive Secretary, 6. Treasurer, 7. Assistant Treasurer, 8. Auditor, 9. Assistant Auditor, 10. Public Relations Officer, 11. Twenty Three (23) Directors, 12. Four Sergeants at Arms, and 13. Business Manager, after the usual pre-election conferences.

The Labor Organizations Division, this Bureau, shall supervise the conduct of said election.<sup>[3]</sup>

A Motion for Reconsideration was filed by the incumbent officers of KKMK-MWSS, led by its President, Genaro Bautista, with the BLR, but was denied by Perlita Bathan-Velasco on 08 July 1993.

An appeal was filed with the Office of the Secretary of Labor and Employment where the order of the BLR was assailed as having been issued with grave abuse of discretion and without jurisdiction.<sup>[4]</sup>

On 24 August 1993, an Order was issued by the Office of the Secretary of Labor and Employment, through Undersecretary Bienvenido Laguesma, part of which reads:

Records clearly show that the subject of the present controversy is an intra union conflict involving an employee's organization in the public sector created and registered pursuant to Executive Order No. 180. Consequently, this office (referring to the Secretary of Labor and Employment) has no other recourse but to dismiss the appeal for lack of jurisdiction.

Wherefore, the instant appeal is hereby dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. Accordingly, let the entire records of this case be returned to the Bureau of Labor Relations, for appropriate action.<sup>[5]</sup>

The then incumbent officers of KKMK-MWSS, represented by its President, Genaro C. Bautista, filed a special civil action for *certiorari* which was, however, dismissed. The Court, on 20 September 1993, issued the following Resolution:

G.R. No. 111635 (Incumbent Officers of KKMK-MWSS represented by its President Genaro C. Bautista vs. Hon. Bienvenido E. Laguesma, in his capacity as Undersecretary of Labor and Employment, Hon. Perlita Bathan-Velasco, in her capacity as Officer-In-Charge of the Bureau of Labor Relations, Bonifacio De Guzman and 544 other members of KKMK-MWSS). – Acting on the special civil action for *certiorari*, with prayer for the issuance of a temporary restraining order, the Court Resolved to DISMISS the petition for being insufficient in form and substance, and for want of a genuine justiciable issue.

Petitioners claim to be incumbent officers of the Kaisahan at Kapatiran ng mga Manggagawa sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (KKMK-MWSS). However, they are not individually named in the petition.

In the main, the petition argues that public respondents have no jurisdiction over an intra-union dispute among government employees, hence, cannot order a new election of officers. A cursory reading of the Order of 24 August 1993 issued by respondent Undersecretary reveals that he agrees with this view. Thus –

Records clearly show that the subject of the present controversy is an intra-union conflict involving an employees organization in the public sector created and registered pursuant to Executive Order No. 180. Consequently, this Office (referring to the Secretary of Labor and Employment) has no other recourse but to dismiss the appeal for lack of jurisdiction.

There is no valid issue therefore to be resolved in the instant petition.<sup>[6]</sup>

This Resolution of the Court became final and executory on 27 October 1994 and was recorded in the Book of Entries of Judgments.<sup>[7]</sup>

Earlier, or on 25 November 1993, a Petition for Prohibition with Prayer for a Temporary Restraining Order/Injunction<sup>[8]</sup> was filed by Genaro Bautista, *et al.*, against Perlita Bathan-Velasco, Director, Eugenia Fernandez, Med-Arbiter, and Johnny P. Garcia, Chief, Labor Organizations Division, all of the BLR, before the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Quezon City, Branch 87. The petition sought to enjoin the herein respondents from proceeding with the election of officers of KKMK-MWSS scheduled on 02 December 1993, and to permanently prohibit them from exercising jurisdiction over the conduct of election of the officers of the KKMK-MWSS.

On 26 November 1993, the RTC, Quezon City, Branch 87, through Judge Elsie Ligot Telan, issued a temporary restraining order, quoted as follows:

A verified petition for prohibition with prayer for a temporary restraining order/injunction has been filed by the plaintiffs. The petition being sufficient in form and substance, and so as not to render the issues raised moot and academic, the defendants are hereby ordered to temporarily refrain from proceeding with the election of officers of the KKMK-MWSS scheduled on December 2, 1993, until further orders from the Court.

Let the prayer for issuance of injunction be set for hearing on December 7, 1993 at 8:30 a.m., at which date and time, defendants may show cause why the same should not be granted.

Let summons together with copies of the complaint be served upon the defendants.<sup>[9]</sup>

Copies of this Order were served upon the defendants therein on 29 November 1993.<sup>[10]</sup>

On 02 December 1993, the election of the officers of KKMK-MWSS pushed through despite the issuance of the temporary restraining order. Another Order was issued by Branch 87 on the same date, hereunder quoted:

Counsel for petitioners appeared today with an urgent *ex-parte* manifestation stating that despite the order of this Court, dated November 26, 1993, restraining the defendants temporarily from proceeding with the election of officers of the KKMK-MWSS – scheduled for today, until further orders, and that the officials of the MWSS had been served copy of this order, the election is now being held in utter defiance and disobedience of the said order of this Court.

To substantiate the above manifestation report are affidavits attached thereto executed by Angelito Ignacio, alleged incumbent Asst. Treasurer of the KKMK-MWSS and Mario Perez, incumbent assistant auditor, respectively, swearing to the truth that the prohibited elections are now being held at the compounds of the MWSS, Balara, Quezon City, and at Arroceros, Manila.

The defendants in this case together with Teofilo Asuncion and Gregorio Garcia, who were furnished copy of the order and such other persons who are involved in conducting [of] the election and/or sanctioning the same are hereby given up to 4:30 o'clock this afternoon to explain why they should not be punished for contempt in defying the order of this Court dated November 26, 1993.

The Court hereby reiterates its order restraining the defendants, their agents, assigns and representatives, and any or all persons having to do with such elections, specifically the management of the MWSS and all others acting in cooperation with them or acting on their behalf or direction, from conducting or continuing or tolerating the elections scheduled today.<sup>[11]</sup>

On 07 December 1993, another Order was issued by the RTC, Quezon City, Branch 87, part of which reads:

“The defendants, as well as all their agents, assigns, representatives and any or all persons having to do with the elections, scheduled on December 2, 1993, including the BLR officials and the management of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, and all others cooperating with them, or acting on their behalf and direction, are hereby restrained from continuing or tolerating the election process in question at any stage thereof, and if already accomplished in defiance of the orders of this Court, the said defendants are ordered to refrain from giving effect to the election by ratifying and registering the same and recognizing the persons supposedly elected. Further, the persons allegedly elected in said elections are hereby ordered to refrain from assuming office and acting as officers of the KKMK-MWSS.”<sup>[12]</sup>

On 28 December 1993, an order for the issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction was issued by Branch 87.<sup>[13]</sup> A day later, or on 29 December 1993, a Writ of Preliminary Injunction was issued by the RTC, the pertinent portion of which reads:

NOW THEREFORE, you the respondents, your agents and representatives, particularly the officers concerned ordering them until further orders of this Court to refrain from giving any effect to the elections above adverted to by ratifying and registering the same, and recognizing as officers the persons supposedly elected; and for the latter to refrain from assuming office and acting as officers of the KKMK-MWSS.<sup>[14]</sup>

After the case was re-raffled to Branch 220, RTC, Quezon City,<sup>[15]</sup> presided by Judge Prudencio Altre Castillo, Jr., the respondents, on 20 June 1994, filed a Reiteration of Motion to Dismiss and Motion to Lift Writ of Preliminary Injunction,<sup>[16]</sup> on the ground of lack of jurisdiction and that the injunction does not anymore serve its purpose.<sup>[17]</sup> Branch 220 issued an Order dated 01 July 1994, dismissing the case, the decretal portion of which states:

WHEREFORE, the instant case is dismissed. The Writ is ordered quashed and Petitioners are hereby ordered to show cause why their injunction bond should not be confiscated in favor of the respondents.<sup>[18]</sup>

A motion for reconsideration was filed by Bautista, et al., dated 16 July 1994, alleging among other things, that the RTC has jurisdiction considering that the case before it was an action for prohibition, which was cognizable by it.<sup>[19]</sup> As a result of which Branch 220 issued another Order<sup>[20]</sup> dated 27 December 1994 reinstating the Writ of Preliminary Injunction and injunction bond.

A motion for reconsideration was filed by the private respondents but was denied by Branch 220 in its order dated 27 April 1995.<sup>[21]</sup>

On 18 May 1995, a petition for certiorari, prohibition and mandamus with prayer for Preliminary Injunction and/or Restraining Order was filed before the Court of Appeals by private respondents herein.<sup>[22]</sup> In it, the orders of Branch 220 dated 27 December 1994 and 27 April 1995 were assailed for having been issued with grave abuse of discretion.

On 09 October 1995, a Decision was rendered by the Court of Appeals finding for the private respondents, upholding that the BLR had jurisdiction over an intra-union dispute, the dispositive portion of which reads:

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING PREMISES, the instant petition for *certiorari*, prohibition and *mandamus* is hereby GRANTED. The assailed orders of December 27, 1994 and April 27, 1995 are hereby SET ASIDE and NULLIFIED for reasons above-stated. No costs.<sup>[23]</sup>

Petitioner then filed a motion for reconsideration dated 27 October 1995,<sup>[24]</sup> but was denied by the court *a quo* in its Resolution dated 08 January 1996, which is quoted hereunder:

This Court hereby resolves the following:

- (1) to DENY the motion for the issuance of temporary restraining order of the petitioners, considering that the instant case has already been decided on October 9, 1995;
- (2) to DENY the motion for reconsideration of the respondents, it appearing that there are no new issues raised which would warrant the reversal or modification of Our decision.<sup>[25]</sup>

On 13 February 1996, a petition for review on certiorari was filed before this Court by Genaro Bautista<sup>[26]</sup> seeking the reversal and setting aside of the Decision and Resolution of the Court of Appeals cited earlier.

Meanwhile, on 28 May 1996, a petition for *mandamus* was filed by Genaro Bautista, as President, and by the other officers<sup>[27]</sup> and members of the board<sup>[28]</sup> of KKMK-MWSS against Angel L. Lazaro III, Administrator, MWSS, and the Board of Trustees of MWSS, before the RTC, Quezon City, raffled again to Branch 220, docketed as Sp. Proc. No. Q-96-27586.<sup>[29]</sup> In this petition, it was prayed, among other things, that Angel Lazaro III and the Board of Trustees of MWSS give due recognition to Genaro Bautista, et al., as officers of KKMK-MWSS, and that the union dues be released to the latter.

On 27 June 1996, an Urgent Motion for Issuance of Temporary Restraining Order<sup>[30]</sup> was filed before this Court by the private respondents praying that Regional Trial Court Judge Prudencio Altre Castillo be enjoined from hearing the *mandamus* case.

Then Associate Justice Teodoro R. Padilla, as Chairman of the First Division, issued a Temporary Restraining Order on 08 July 1996, a portion of which reads:

NOW, THEREFORE, you (respondents), your officers, agents, representatives, and/or persons acting upon your orders or, in your place or stead, are hereby ENJOINED to desist from hearing the case in SP Case No. Q-96-27586 entitled “Genaro Bautista, et al. vs. Angel L. Lazaro, Administrator, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), Board of Trustees (MWSS).”

A Motion to Lift Temporary Restraining Order<sup>[31]</sup> and a Supplemental Motion<sup>[32]</sup> thereto were later filed by Genaro Bautista, et al.

Thereafter, petitioner Genaro Bautista filed an urgent motion to declare the administrator, Angel L. Lazaro III, and manager, Erlich V. Barraquias, of the Legal Department of the MWSS in indirect contempt of court.<sup>[33]</sup> The petitioner, in this motion, alleged that Lazaro and Barraquias both failed to follow the opinions rendered by the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) to the effect that the petitioner and his set of officers are still the rightful parties with whom MWSS management has to deal with in all union matters as they continue to be the incumbent officers.<sup>[34]</sup> The Court issued a Resolution<sup>[35]</sup> dated 18 June 1997 requiring the said administrator and manager to comment on the motion. A joint comment was thereafter filed by Lazaro and Barraquias dated 28 July 1997. In it, they contended that the first two opinions rendered by the OGCC were overtaken by the Decision and Resolution of the Court of Appeals, now the subjects of this petition for review on *certiorari*, wherein it declared that the regular courts have no jurisdiction to prohibit the holding of the election of the officers and members of the board of KKMK-MWSS, as it is lodged with the BLR. When they again sought the guidance of the OGCC as to the effect of the aforementioned Decision of the Court of Appeals, another opinion was issued by the OGCC which, they said, did not resolve that question but instead merely reiterated its previous opinions deviant to the conclusions of the Court of Appeals.<sup>[36]</sup>

## **THE ISSUE AND PENDING INCIDENTS**

The bombardment of cases filed before several fora notwithstanding, the solitary question raised by the petitioner is simply whether or not

the RTC has jurisdiction over a case involving an intra-union dispute (election of officers) of an employee's organization in the public sector (MWSS).<sup>[37]</sup>

Stated in another way, does the BLR have jurisdiction to call for and conduct the election of officers of an employee's association in the public sector?

Pending resolution in the instant case are the motions to lift the temporary restraining order in the *mandamus* case before the lower court and to declare the administrator and the manager of the Legal Department of the MWSS in indirect contempt of court.

### **THE COURT'S RULINGS**

The decision of the Court of Appeals relied on our earlier ruling in the case of *Association of Court of Appeals Employees (ACAE) vs. Ferrer-Calleja*.<sup>[38]</sup> In this case, we held that the BLR has the jurisdiction to call for and supervise the conduct of certification elections in the public sector, *viz*:

In the same way that CSC validly conducts competitive examinations to grant requisite eligibilities to court employees, we see no constitutional objection to DOLE handling the certification process in the Court of Appeals, considering its expertise, machinery, and experience in this particular activity. Executive Order No. 180 requires organizations of government employees to register with both CSC and DOLE. This ambivalence notwithstanding, the CSC has no facilities, personnel, or experience in the conduct of certification elections. The BLR has to do the job.

Executive Order No. 180 states that certificates of registration of the legitimate employee representatives must be jointly approved by the CSC Chairman and the DOLE Secretary. Executive Order No. 180 is not too helpful in determining whose opinion shall prevail if the CSC Chairman and the DOLE Secretary arrive at different conclusions. At any rate, we shall deal with that problem when it occurs. Insofar as power to call

for and supervise the conduct of certification elections is concerned, we rule against the petitioner.<sup>[39]</sup>

The petitioner contends that the aforementioned case finds no application in the case at bar for the following reasons.

**First**, the *ACAE* case involved a conflict between two government unions in the Court of Appeals, a situation not obtaining in the instant case because what is involved here is only one and the same employee's organization, the KKMK-MWSS.<sup>[40]</sup>

**Second**, the *ACAE* case concerned a certification election, *i.e.*, which between the two government unions should be considered as the bargaining unit before the Court of Appeals, while the present case embraces the issue of who among the members of the organization shall be elected as officers and members of the board.<sup>[41]</sup>

The petitioner likewise advances the theory that the power of the BLR, as found in Executive Order No. 180, is limited only to the registration of a union in a government corporation, and to call for a certification election.<sup>[42]</sup>

Moreover, the petitioner assails the ruling of the court *a quo* to the effect that his group participated in the questioned elections and submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the BLR. According to him, the records will readily show that they did not in any way join in it.<sup>[43]</sup>

We disagree in petitioner's assertions, hence, the petition must fail.

It may be true that the *ACAE* case involved a certification election between two unions in a government entity. However, this does not mean that our previous ruling cannot apply in the instant case.

The authority of the BLR in assuming jurisdiction over a certification election, or any inter-union or intra-union conflicts, is found in Article 226 of the Labor Code of the Philippines, which reads:

ART. 226. BUREAU OF LABOR RELATIONS. – The Bureau of Labor Relations and the Labor Relations Division in the

regional offices of the Department of Labor shall have original and exclusive authority to act, at their own initiative or upon request of either or both parties, on all inter-union and intra-union conflicts, and all disputes, grievances or problems arising from or affecting labor-management relations in all workplaces whether agricultural or nonagricultural, except those arising from the implementation or interpretation of collective bargaining agreements which shall be the subject of grievance procedure and/or voluntary arbitration.

The Bureau shall have fifteen (15) working days to act on labor cases before it, subject to extension by agreement of the parties.

It is quite clear from this provision that BLR has the original and exclusive jurisdiction on all inter-union and intra-union conflicts. An intra-union conflict would refer to a conflict within or inside a labor union, and an inter-union controversy or dispute, one occurring or carried on between or among unions.<sup>[44]</sup> The subject of the case at bar, which is the election of the officers and members of the board of KMKK-MWSS, is, clearly, an intra-union conflict, being within or inside a labor union. It is well within the powers of the BLR to act upon. The petitioner is asking us to make an illogical edict by declaring that our ruling in the *ACAE* case, considering that it involved an inter-union conflict, should not apply to the instant case for the reason that the latter involves an intra-union conflict. This, we cannot do because the law is very clear on this matter.

Executive Order No. 180 (1987),<sup>[45]</sup> particularly Section 16 thereof, is completely lucid as to the settlement of disputes involving government employees, *viz*:

SEC. 16. The Civil Service and labor laws and procedures, whenever applicable, shall be followed in the resolution of complaints, grievances and cases involving government employees.<sup>[46]</sup>

Since Article 226 of the Labor Code has declared that the BLR shall have original and exclusive authority to act on all inter-union and intra-union conflicts, then there should be no more doubt as to its jurisdiction.

We likewise find bereft of merit petitioner's claim that his group did not in any way participate in the subject elections, and therefore, the principle of estoppel cannot apply.

In the Order of the RTC dated 01 July 1994, it appears that the petitioner, indeed, participated in the election. A portion of the Order states:

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Genaro C. Bautista	288
Prudencio Cruz	1080
Bonifacio De Guzman	1081 <sup>[47]</sup>

The petitioner was, undoubtedly, a candidate in the election. The 288 votes for him were counted in his favor.

Further, the petitioner and his group submitted a list of candidates before the BLR dated 04 October 1993<sup>[48]</sup>, which included the name of petitioner himself.

**WHEREFORE**, in view of all the foregoing, the assailed Decision and Resolution of the Court of Appeals being in accord with law, are hereby **AFFIRMED**. Accordingly, the Urgent Motion to Declare the Administrator and Manager, Legal Department, MWSS, in indirect contempt of court is **DENIED**, and the temporary restraining order earlier issued is hereby made permanent. Costs against the petitioner.

**SO ORDERED.**

**PUNO, J., (Chairman), AUSTRIA-MARTINEZ, CALLEJO, SR., and TINGA, JJ., concur.**

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[1] Rollo, pp. 26-36; Penned by Associate Justice Justo P. Torres, Jr., with Associate Justices Ramon U. Mabutias, Jr. and Jose C. Dela Rama concurring.

[2] Rollo, p. 38.

[3] Rollo, pp. 47-48.

- [4] Rollo, pp. 10-11.
- [5] Rollo, p. 108.
- [6] Rollo, pp. 45-46.
- [7] Records, p. 56.
- [8] Records, pp. 46-55.
- [9] Rollo, p. 74.
- [10] Rollo, p. 27.
- [11] Rollo, p. 75.
- [12] Rollo, p. 75-B; page 2 of Order dated 07 December 1993, Regional Trial Court, Quezon City, Branch 87.
- [13] Rollo, p. 76.
- [14] Rollo, p. 77.
- [15] The reason for re-raffling does not appear on the records of the case.
- [16] Rollo, p. 78; Records, p. 79.
- [17] Rollo, p. 79.
- [18] Rollo, pp. 78-79.
- [19] Rollo, pp. 80-86.
- [20] Rollo, pp. 87-93.
- [21] Rollo, pp. 98-100.
- [22] Records, pp. 1-25.
- [23] Rollo, p. 35.
- [24] Rollo, pp. 39-44.
- [25] Rollo, p. 38.
- [26] Rollo, pp. 7-18.
- [27] Espiridion L. Talvo, as 1st Vice President, Helidoro Mercado, as 2nd Vice President, Francisco R. Quirolgico, as Executive Secretary, Mario Perez, as Asst. Secretary, Norberto Merced, as Auditor, Angelito Ignacio, as Treasurer, Marciana Sicat, as Asst. Treasurer, Laurence Guevarra, as P.R.O., Sylvia Agres, as Business Manager, Raymundo Taruc, Recardo Ambil, Raymundo Villanueva and Arturo Vinluan, as Sergeants-at-Arms.
- [28] Domingo De la Peña, Marcel Sanches, Jesus Malabanan, Norberto A. Tuazon, Jr., Franklin Au, Gil Ganaban, Cirilo Gaba, Emmanuel Castillo, Guillermo De Ramos, Alejandro De Lara, David Banaag, Rodolfo Lumugdan, Susan Molo, Guillermo Mendoza, Demetria Bunag, Roberto Punongbayan, Bert Guiam, Noel Villanueva, Alex Lopez and Cristy Lucas
- [29] Rollo, pp. 151-157.
- [30] Rollo, pp. 148-150.
- [31] Rollo, pp. 179-181.
- [32] Rollo, pp. 183-188.
- [33] Rollo, pp. 236-250.
- [34] Rollo, pp. 255-268.
- [35] Rollo, p. 281.
- [36] Rollo, pp. 291-292.
- [37] Rollo, p. 17.
- [38] G.R. No. 94716, 15 November 1991, 203 SCRA 596.
- [39] Emphasis ours.
- [40] Rollo, p. 18.

- [41] Ibid.
- [42] Rollo, pp. 18-19.
- [43] Rollo, p. 19.
- [44] Pepsi-Cola Sales and Advertising Union vs. Hon. Secretary of Labor, G.R. No. 97092, 27 July 1992.
- [45] Providing for the Guidelines for the Exercise of the Right to Organize of Government Employees, Creating a Public Sector Labor-Management Council, and for Other Purposes.
- [46] Emphasis ours.
- [47] Rollo, p. 78.
- [48] Rollo, pp. 294-295.

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