



Republic of the Philippines  
CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

## SENATE

Pasay City

**SUBJECT : REPORT ON THE PUBLIC HEARING CONDUCTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ON SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 70: "RESOLUTION REQUIRING THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION INTO THE PRACTICE OF "ESCORT " SERVICES HELD LAST SEPTEMBER 22, 2004, WEDNESDAY, 11:00 A. M. AT SEN. PADILLA ROOM, SENATE BUILDING, PASAY CITY.**

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### 1.0 PRELIMINARY

This is the second public hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development on Senate Resolution No. 70, concerning the issue on the proliferation of "Escort Services" as alleged fronts for prostitution in the Philippines.

Among the Senators present during the hearing were Hon. Jinggoy Estrada, Hon. M.A. Madrigal, Hon. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito Estrada, and Hon. Juan M. Flavier. Among the resource persons present were Assistant Secretary Jeffrey D. Cortazar of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Director Alice Bonoan of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Director Irma Valiente of the Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW) – DOLE, Mr. Orlando Ozoa - Assistant Chief of the Permits and Licensing Department of Office of the Quezon City Government, Ms. Martha Daniels, Ms. Keana Reeves, Ms. Kriselda Kristel, Ms. Janine Roque, and Ms. Francine Prieto.

### 2.0 HIGHLIGHTS

During the hearing, Senator Jinggoy Estrada inquired whether the Permits and Licensing Department of the Office of the Quezon City government is aware of the fact that there are a lot of night spots in Quezon City that employ women minors. Mr. Ozoa replied that their City Government regulates the employment of minors in their area. He added that they require these establishments to secure a business permit with the City Government in order to monitor the employment of minors in their area. Randomly, they send their own inspection team to monitor the compliance of the more than 120 establishments in Quezon City. He added that the Quezon City Government has apprehended a number of minors caught in the act of performing prostitution services in violation of the existing laws and have issued cease-and-desist orders to their

establishments. The problem lies in the fact that these unscrupulous individuals circumvent the law by registering a new corporation a few months after their closure and start the same kind of business with the same profile of directors and incorporators.

On the question of Senator Flavio as to what category does the Quezon City Government classify these escort service providers, Mr. Ozoa explained that escort service is traditionally included in the travel industry workers where their services as tourist guides and escorts are utilized to accompany tourists to the strategic sites in the country. Mr. Ozoa explained that by definition an escort service provider would be someone who is permitted or allowed to go out with a customer as an escort. Under existing laws, these are legitimate occupations since they only provide escort and entertainment services to a client. On the other hand, those Guest Relations Officers (GROs) are classified under the category of employees of nightclubs, nightspots, bars, disco houses and beer gardens. To monitor these GROs, the City Government requires them to secure a health permit, police clearance, NBI clearance and a sedula before they are issued an occupational permit.

On the query of Senator Flavio to Ms. Reeves as to how this escort service issue was brought to the attention of the public, Ms. Reeves explained that during an interview in an ABS/CBN TV program entitled, "*Kontrobersya*", she narrated that she was once an escort service provider giving sexual services to prominent politicians, including Congressmen. This story has caught the attention of the media and the general public that is why she decided to attend this meeting to clarify certain details and expose this unscrupulous practice.

On the query of Senator Loi Ejercito Estrada on what are the specific services being provided by an escort service provider, Ms. Reeves explained that basically their job is to entertain to their guests. However, it cannot be avoided that there are aggressive clients who request to engage in sexual activity with them for an extra payment. And because most of these women want to earn extra money, they agree to engage in such practice.

On the question as to how much they are being paid for the escort services (with sex) they provide to their clients, Ms. Reeves stated that they charge around Php 10,000 to Php 15,000 pesos per client. For escort service that is purely a PR service, the fee is only Php 5,000 pesos per client. This is the going rate for escort service providers who are not popular. However, popular artists and fashion models are being paid much much higher than this rate. Ms. Kriselda Kristel, however, noted that not all escort service providers engage in the practice of prostitution. In the past, the escort service profession was merely a public relations (PR) service. In real practice, however, it really depends on the woman providing the escort service if she is willing to engage in sexual intercourse with the client.

Ms. Francine Prieto further clarified that as fashion models, they provide ushering jobs to their clients to promote a particular product or commodity. Some corporations invite fashion models to usher their guest in corporate events, ceremonies or to promote a commodity in a product launching. These fashion models also provide ushering services in bar tours where they promote products like liquors and cigarettes.

On the query of Senator Loi Ejercito Estrada as to how much of their income from escort service go to the pimps who brokered the deal, Ms. Reeves explained that in some cases the pimps earn more than the escort service providers. In most cases, the pimps earn 50% of the value of the transaction. In other cases wherein the escort service include sexual intercourse with the client, the pimps earn more than the prostitute because the pimps do not disclose the actual price of the deal.

Ms. Janine Roque explained that there are basically two (2) types of escort services, namely: (1) "WOK" or escort service with sex, and (2) "PR" or escort service without sex. The term "WOK" is being used by their pimps to refer to an escort service which involves having sexual intercourse with their clients. She added that there are a lot of women minors who engage in the practice of escort service with sex or "WOK". She stated that she was a minor when she first provided WOK with her clients. Moreover, there are pimps who really force their lady talents to engage in sexual intercourse with their clients because the pimps earn more from such a transaction. There are other instances wherein the escort service arrangement was supposed to be a purely public relations type of service. However, during the actual provision of service, the escort service provider engages in sexual activity with their client because of the lure to earn more money from such an activity. She added that she had a client who is still an incumbent Congressman. She further stated that she is receiving phone call threats from an unknown source asking her not to divulge the identities of her clients.

Mr. Ozoa stated that the Quezon City government has around 34 inspectors monitoring these nights spots in Quezon City. For those women caught involved in the practice of prostitution, they file the appropriate cases in court. He added that many of these arrested women are being bailed-out by their managers and resume their nefarious activities in the streets.

After presenting pictures of nude women who are minors dancing on stage in Queen's Castle Bar in Quezon City, Senator Jinggoy Estrada asked the Licensing Department of the Quezon City Government as to why this situation is being allowed in Quezon City. Mr. Ozoa explained that because there are more than 120 night spots in Quezon City, their inspectors could not inspect them one-by-one everyday.

Mr. Ozoa stated that he will recommend the closure of *Queen's Castle* to the Mayor of Quezon City the after being shown the photographs of nude women who are minors dancing on stage in the said establishment. Senator Madrigal requested Mr. Ozoa to invite the members of the Committee when they close down Queen's Castle. The members would want to witness the closure of this establishment to set an example to the public.

Senator Madrigal stated that what is worth noting here is the fact that while these freelance providers earn a lot of money from this undertaking, they do not pay taxes to the government because their business undertaking is not registered.

Director Irma Valiente of the DOLE stated that this situation of escort service has been going on for a long time. They acknowledged the fact that the profession of providing escort service to clients for public relations purposes is a legitimate undertaking. However, DOLE cannot discount the fact that the provision of escort services are being used as fronts for prostitution. On the issue on the involvement of minors in escort service, it is the position of DOLE that this situation is non-negotiable because prostitution of minors is one of the worst forms of child labor. The practice of escort service with sexual contact with the client is tantamount to prostitution.

DOLE further stated that they have a National Program Against Child Labor which is being implemented in partnership with other departments like the DSWD. One of the components of this program is the IEC drive which seeks to educate and prevent the entry of minors in these worst forms of undertaking. The Department is glad that the Committee is probing into this issue so that proper interventions can be crafted on this concern.

Ms. Bonoan of the DSWD stated that the issue of escort service is not included in the DSWD's program for the disadvantaged women. However, escort service could be a potential avenue for prostitution of women because it capitalizes on the vulnerability of

women and children. She added that those women who are victims of sexual abuse as a result of their being an escort service provider can approach the DSWD because they have a pool of expert practitioners who are trained to handle their cases.

On the question of Senator Madrigal as to the position of DOLE on the legality of the escort service as a profession, Asec. Cortazar stressed that as far as escort service with sexual activity with the client is concerned, the practice is definitely an illegal practice. This practice is covered under the issue of trafficking of women. He added that legislative enactments concerning the protection of women and children are already extensive in this country. What is lacking at the operational level or implementation level are comprehensive programs, projects and activities to implement the noble provisions of the law.

Senator Madrigal stated that based on the recent United Nations (UN) data, there are about 600,000 to 800,000 people who are trafficked every year in the Philippines.

On the question of Senator Madrigal as to why the Quezon City government issues business permits to establishments who employ female minors and worst, make them dance nude on stage, Mr. Ozoa explained that at the time these establishments applied for a business permit, they have complied with all the necessary documents and clearances as required by law.

Ms. Roque confessed that one of the clients whom she serviced was a congressman, Ms. Roque recalled that not only was she forced to engage in sexual activity with her client, she was also required to take drugs first. The one who supplied the drugs is a politician. Senator Jinggoy Estrada requested Ms. Roque to divulge the name of the politician who forced her to take drugs before engaging in sex with her, but Ms. Roque pleaded that said information be divulged in an Executive Session for her own security. She hinted that this client is an incumbent Congressman from Luzon.

With that, the Chairman requested the media, other resource persons and audience to leave the room for an executive session.

The meeting was stopped at 1:09 p.m. to start the executive session.

*(Submitted by Ms. Gemma Genoveva G. Tanpiengco)*