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Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 3428



Introduced by
Anakpawis Representatives Crispin B. Beltran, Rafael V. Mariano;
Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Largoza-Maza;
Bayan Muna Representatives Satur C. Ocampo, Joel G. Virador, Teodoro A. Casiño

EXPLANATORY NOTE

It is said that the lives and heroic deeds of Filipinos who served their country should never be forgotten and in fact should be remembered and taught to succeeding generations. History books are filled with descriptions of these various individuals, and the role they played in defending the nation against foreign invaders, or in setting up the governmental institutions, or in pushing for crucial economic, cultural and political reforms. Textbooks, particularly those included in the elementary and highschool curricula, describe the lives of these Filipinos, and explain precisely why they deserve to be emulated, and their example held up for future generations to follow.

A random scan of these elementary and secondary school textbooks, however, reveal that there is barely, if any, mention of the role of the Philippine labor movement and its leaders.

There is no debate that the Philippine labor movement has helped shape Philippine history and politics. The history of the country's labor movement, the various labor groups, their campaigns and stands on crucial political issues through time have made significant impact on the country's current state.

The lives of labor leaders, most particularly those who have espoused a strong nationalist stance and not just a genuine, pro-poor, pro-worker outlook, deserve to be brought to the public light, and taught to current generations of Filipinos. These labor leaders, such as Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia and his son Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia devoted and gave their lives in unselfish service to the cause of the Filipino worker and other impoverished sectors of Philippine society.

Born to an impoverished life in Tarlac, Felixberto 'Ka Bert' Olalia (August 5, 1904 - December 4, 1983), started to work when he was 16 years old. He left his family in 1920 for Manila to become a worker in a shoe factory. He easily embraced unionism and became member of the Union de Chineleros y Zapateros de Filipinas, Comite 4. It was one of the first industrial unions in the Philippines. From being a messenger, he was elected president of the union.

Ka Bert was active in unionism from the very start. He became part of the finance committee of the Collective Labor Movement in 1929, and became the secretary general of Katipunan ng mga Anakpawis sa Pilipinas in 1939. He worked with veteran union leaders like Crisanto Evangelista.

He was one of the founders of Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO) in 1945, and Kalipunan ng mga Kaisahang Manggagawa (KKM) in 1949. KKM was disbanded after Ka Bert was arrested in 1951. Upon release in 1954, he founded the Confederation of Labor in the Philippines (CLP), and later, the National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU) in 1957.

Despite the government's violent repression of workers, Ka Bert persisted in organizing work and became vice - chairperson of the Katipunan ng Manggagawang Pilipino in 1959, the vice - president of Lapiang

Manggagawa in 1962, and chairperson of Malayang Samahang Magsasaka (MASAKA) in 1964. He was also active in the labor committee of the Movement for the Advancement of Nationalism (MAN) in 1966.

The government under then Pres. Elpidio Quirino sought to crush the burgeoning trade union movement, and discourage labor leaders. Quirino had Ka Bert arrested for subversion, and later charged him with rebellion in 1956. Ka Bert, however, persisted in his work. During the height of martial law when strikes and labor unions were outlawed, he founded and became the first national chairperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) in 1980, and Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawang Pilipino (PMP). Two years later, on August 13, 1982 which became known as the day of the infamous labor crackdown, the dictator Ferdinand Marcos had Ka Bert arrested and detained.

During the eight months of detention, Ka Bert's body grew weak. Later, he acquired a heart illness. He died of pneumonia in prison. A day before his death on December 4, 1983, he was still able to send a message to the workers gathered in Plaza Miranda:

"How can I describe Philippine society? It's a one big isolation cell. Without a doubt, under the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship, Philippines is one big and stinking prison cell. What is the condition of the people? Slaves...exploited...and beggars! Because rights are repressed, livelihood is deprived; the soul is blatantly being sold to the foreign capitalists... The puppies and dogs of Irene Marcos are luckier. They eat on time, they are well-provided with medications, and they even live in a palace!"

Ka Bert's son Ka Lando, meanwhile, very much lived his own life the way his father did. He became a lawyer with the determined objective to use his knowledge of the law to help workers push for their legal rights. He was an active union leader, and became the president of the KMU after his father died in 1983. He became the legal counsel of National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU). He also became the president, both of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), and Partido ng Bayan.

Because of his unflinching criticism of the continued exploitation that workers suffered even under the supposed 'revolutionary government' of President Corazon Aquino, Ka Lando like his father before him was targeted by military forces allied with the government. Together with activist worker Leonor Alay-ay, Ka Lando was abducted on the night of November 13, 1986. The following day, their dead bodies were found. They bore signs of vicious torture. Ka Lando sustained four gunshots in the head, and six stab wounds in his torso. His mouth was stuffed with newspapers, his hands tied closely together with his own belt.

On the day of his burial, more than 600,000 workers and people from all walks of life joined the funeral march and demanded justice for his brutal murder. Work stoppages took place in 217 workplaces.

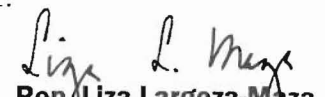
It is important that the Filipino people be made aware of the two Olalias' lives and how they lived it in service of the oppressed sectors and in furtherance of the cause of the Filipino working class. Considered as heroes of the Filipino workers, Ka Bert and Ka Lando are more than worthy of being included in Philippine history and social studies textbooks. Their lives should be emulated by the Filipino youth, and taught to future generations of Filipinos, many of whom will eventually be workers themselves.

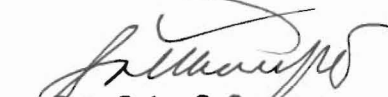
This bill seeks to rectify the neglect by proposing the inclusion of the lives of Ka Bert and Ka Lando in the social studies and history books of elementary, secondary and collegiate curricula in the country.

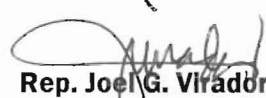
In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

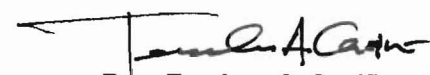

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AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE INCLUSION IN SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY BOOKS OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND COLLEGIATE CURRICULA THE LIVES AND HEROIC CONTRIBUTION OF ANTI-IMPERIALIST LABOR LEADERS SUCH AS FELIXBERTO 'KA BERT' OLALIA AND ROLANDO 'KA LANDO' OLALIA TO THE MILITANT LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE OF THE FILIPINO WORKING PEOPLE FOR GENUINE JUSTICE AND FREEDOM AND APPROPRIATING FUND THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. The lives and heroic contribution of labor leaders such as Felixberto 'Ka Bert' Olalia and Rolando 'Ka Lando' Olalia to the Philippine labor movement shall be included in the social studies and history books of elementary, secondary and collegiate curricula in the country.

SECTION 2. The secretary of Education shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the immediate and effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 3. The amount necessary for the implementation of this shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Education under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after the publication in the Official Gazette or in any two (2) national newspapers or general circulations.

Approved,