

Anyway, you look at it, the lump sum pay budget of \$198-million earmarked by the U.S. Congress to pay for the services of the Filipinos during World War II under the Stimulus bill in this time of economic crisis appears to be a big amount.

But how would you compare the \$3-Billion price tag estimated by General Omar Bradley, then director of the U.S. Veterans Administration, to pay for war services of the Filipino veterans after the end of World War II in 1945 as the Philippines lay in ruin?

According to the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics, the \$3-B in 1945 will have a buying power of \$35-B in 2008.

Of course, it is no brainer: it was huge! A huge savings for Uncle Sam, that is.

So, huge that the U.S. Congress deemed the heroism and bravery of tens of thousands of Filipinos who survived the war as "not active service" in the U.S. Armed Forces as it rejected the payment of \$3-billion to the Filipino veterans. The U. S. Congress instead passed the Rescission Acts of 1946, trimming the amount to \$500-million to pay for "improving the roads and port facilities" and health care of veterans in the Philippines. Nothing for their war services!

This 1946 law also reduced by half the insurance, service-connected disability and death benefits, payable on the basis of one Philippine peso (which was half a dollar at that time) for each dollar received by American veterans and 66 other nationalities that formed part of the Allied Forces against Japan. Filipino survivors were denied nonservice connected disability or death, educational benefits, etc.

A 1966 Philippine Conference Joint RP-US Veterans Commission headed by Rep. Olin E. Teague of the U.S. and General Eulogio Balao of the Philippines agreed for a full dollar-for-dollar restoration of rights and privileges for the Filipino veterans but it never got past U.S. House Committee of Veterans Affairs.

### **REVIEWING THE 1966 VETERANS COMMISSION**

If only Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (Dem.-HI) took a look at the 1966 commission recommendation, the first serious study of the issue 20 years after the war, I am sure he would agree that the \$198-M Filipino Veteran Compensation was a drop in the bucket if the U.S. really wanted to pay its obligation to these veterans.

But the good and brave senator failed to seize the moment when he introduced the

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Written by Joseph G. Lariosa

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compensation measure by recommending a two-tier, instead of one-tier, lump sum payments of \$15,000 for Filipino veterans, who are United States citizens and \$9,000 for Filipino veterans who are not U.S citizens.

Because the \$9,000 and the \$15,000 are token amounts compared to what these veterans rightly deserve, I'm sure the \$198-M will not "unjustly enrich" the Filipino veterans living in the Philippines as to make "a difference in monetary and living standards between the United States and the Philippines" – the standard line of defense by the U.S. Department of Justice opposing several dozens of cases filed by Filipino veterans, seeking their equal pay for their war services in various U.S. Federal District Courts.

### **WHY NOT UNIFORM AMOUNT?**

But why did Senator Inouye not tell his colleagues that the one-time payment for the Filipino veterans should have been a uniform amount no matter if these veterans are U. S. citizens or not?

After all, the Selective Training and Service Act passed by the U.S. Congress on Sept. 16, 1940, that was enforced in 1942 prohibited racial discrimination in pay for enlisted personnel. These Filipino veterans, whether they were U.S. citizens or not at that time, would have received the same amount of service pay, like any American soldier, under this law.

When Senator Inouye, a decorated war hero, himself, told the U.S. Senate during the debate on the Stimulus bill last Feb. 5th that during the war the U.S. Congress had invited the Filipino veterans to apply for U.S. citizenships, this reminder was unnecessary because at that time, Filipinos were considered "U.S. nationals" as the Philippines was a U.S. Commonwealth, like Puerto Rico.

But because the U.S. desperately needed personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces, the U.S. Congress passed in 1942 the Second War Powers Act, which amended the Nationality Act of 1940, that would immediately naturalize these veterans prior to December 1946, waiving normal numerous requirements for naturalization.

But the insufficient time and lack of sufficient information to tell the veterans plus the early pullout of the U.S. naturalization officer from Manila, only allowed 4,000 out of the more than 120,000 Filipino veterans to become U.S. citizens.

In other words, had the U.S. government given the Filipino veterans a chance to naturalize in the Philippines, the Filipino veterans now living in the Philippines would have become American citizens, too, right before and after the war and they could have been eligible to receive the \$15,000 lump sum pay also.

### **ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE**

G iving Filipino veterans living in the Philippines the equal amount of lump sum pay – either \$9,000 or \$15,000 -- with those Filipino veterans living in the United States is in keeping with

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the battle cry: "one for all and all for one."

Even the dissenting opinion of Circuit Judge John F. Kilkenny in the class action suit of Filipino-American Veterans and Dependents Association (FAVADA), et al. vs. United States at the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California in San Francisco in 1974 favors the grant of benefits to Filipino veterans living in the Philippines.

Kilkenny said that in the case of the Recessions Acts of 1946, "It is my opinion that the ( US) Congress never intended this legislation to apply to a Filipino veteran who became a citizen of the United States or a Filipino veteran legally residing in the United States."

And because these veterans will be receiving token amounts, which is a huge savings for the U.S. government, it would not hurt if Senator Inouye would have recommended to his colleagues that when the veterans get their lump sum pays, they will also get a personal letter of apology signed by President Barack Obama for the 63-year delay in honoring and recognizing their war services.

Just as the first President George H. Bush wrote a personal letter of apology to each of the Japanese Americans, two thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, who were interned in various concentration camps in America during the war when they each received a lump sum pay of \$20,000 in 1990 for violation of their civil rights. They were prevented from helping Japan after attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941. ( [lariosa\\_jos@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net) ) # # #

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