The Applicability of the Agricultural Tenancy Act to Tenancy Relations in Public Agricultural Lands

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SUBJECT(S): TENANCY RELATIONS, PUBLIC LANDS

The case of *Angat v. Maligaya Rice Experimental Station*, decided by the Court of Industrial Relations, brought to the fore the issue of whether tenancy laws are applicable to public lands falling under Commonwealth Act 141 or the Public Land Act. This question arises due to the inherent inapplicability of tenancy laws to the Government in cases to which the latter is a party, the lack of an explicit authority to guide its application, and the passage of Republic Act No. 1199 or the Agricultural Tenancy Act.

The Author posits that possible tenancy relations, as defined in the Public Land Act, may arise in cases where public agricultural lands have been leased by the Government and distinguishes this type of tenancy relation from that which arises under the Agricultural Tenancy Act. There is no explicit answer from the Supreme Court regarding the applicability of the Agricultural Tenancy Act in the former scenario since the Court's decisions regarding lands affected by the Public Land Act have not directly dealt with such an issue. Further, commentators also disagree on whether such lands belong to the public domain or are considered as private or patrimonial properties of the State. There is also no direct indication of legislative intent to make the Agricultural Tenancy Act to apply.

Further, there are several conflicting provisions between the Public Land Act and the Agricultural Tenancy Act, thus making the application of the latter to public lands governed by the former difficult. The Author recommends a strict application of the Agricultural Tenancy Act, such that it operates by exception; that is, if the requisites provided for in Sections 3-5 of the Agricultural Tenancy Law are not met, then the provisions of the Public Land Act shall apply.