

[EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 561, September 21, 1979]

CREATING THE COMMISSION ON THE SETTLEMENT OF LAND PROBLEMS

WHEREAS, land problems are frequently a source of conflicts among small settlers, landowners and members of cultural minorities;

WHEREAS, these problems, if not properly and immediately attended to, will breed social unrest which will hamper the implementation of government programs designed to ameliorate the living conditions of people involved in these problems;

WHEREAS, as a means of providing a mechanism for the expeditious settlement of these problems, a more effective administrative body should be established; and

WHEREAS, under Presidential Decree No. 1416, the President is given continuing authority to reorganize the National Government;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FERDINAND E. MARCOS, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Constitution, and pursuant to the authority vested in me by Presidential Decree No. 1416, do hereby order:

SECTION 1. Creation. – There is hereby created a Commission on the Settlement of Land Problems, hereafter referred to as the Commission, under the Office of the President.

SEC. 2. Composition. – The Commission shall be composed of three members, namely: one Commissioner and two Associate Commissioners who shall all be appointed by the President.

The Commissioner and the two Associate Commissioners shall receive a salary equivalent to that of an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals and Judge of the Court of First Instance, respectively.

SEC. 3. Powers and Functions. – The Commission shall have the following powers and functions:

1. Coordinate the activities, particularly the investigation work, of the various government offices and agencies involved in the settlement of land problems or disputes, and streamline administrative procedures to relieve small settlers and landholders and members of cultural minorities of the expense and time-consuming delay attendant to the solution of such problems or disputes;

2. Refer and follow-up for immediate action by the agency having appropriate jurisdiction any land problem or dispute referred to the Commission: Provided, That

the Commission may, in the following cases, assume jurisdiction and resolve land problems or disputes which are critical and explosive in nature considering, for instance, the large number of the parties involved, the presence or emergence of social tension or unrest, or other similar critical situations requiring immediate action:

- (a) Between occupants/squatters and pasture lease agreement holders or timber concessioners;
- (b) Between occupants/squatters and government reservation grantees;
- (c) Between occupants/squatters and public land claimants or applicants;
- (d) Petitions for classification, release and/or subdivision of lands of the public domain; and
- (e) Other similar land problems of grave urgency and magnitude.

The Commission shall promulgate such rules and procedures as will insure expeditious resolution and action on the above cases. The resolution, order or decision of the Commission on any of the foregoing cases shall have the force and effect of a regular administrative resolution, order or decision and shall be binding upon the parties therein and upon the agency having jurisdiction over the same. Said resolution, order or decision shall become final and executory within thirty (30) days from its promulgation and shall be appealable by certiorari only to the Supreme Court.

3. Recommend to the President innovative measures to resolve expeditiously cases involving, among others, (a) public lands that have been titled in a manifestly erroneous or illegal manner, and (b) implementation of decisions/resolutions of administrative/quasi-judicial agencies vested with jurisdiction to resolve land problems or disputes;

4. Evolve and implement a system of procedure for the speedy investigation and resolution of land disputes or problems at the provincial level;

5. Undertake a comprehensive study of the causes of land disputes, particularly the problems of squatters, in the country and recommend to the President policies and courses of action to prevent or minimize their occurrence;

6. Study and review present policies as embodied in land laws and administrative rules and regulations, in relation to the need for land of the agro-industrial sector and the small farmer, with the end in view of evolving and recommending new laws and policies and establishing priorities in the grant of public lands;

7. Maintain a systematic and permanent management of all records pertaining to land disputes or problems; and

8. Perform such other functions as may hereafter be assigned to it by the President of the Philippines.

In the performance of its functions and discharge of its duties, the Commission is