

FIRST DIVISION

[G.R. No. 98107, August 18, 1997]

BENJAMIN C. JUCO, PETITIONER, VS. NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION AND NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION, RESPONDENTS.

D E C I S I O N

HERMOSISIMA, JR., J.:

This is a petition for certiorari to set aside the Decision of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) dated March 14, 1991, which reversed the Decision dated May 21, 1990 of Labor Arbiter Manuel R. Caday, on the ground of lack of jurisdiction.

Petitioner Benjamin C. Juco was hired as a project engineer of respondent National Housing Corporation (NHC) from November 16, 1970 to May 14, 1975. On May 14, 1975, he was separated from the service for having been implicated in a crime of theft and/or malversation of public funds.

On March 25, 1977, petitioner filed a complaint for illegal dismissal against the NHC with the Department of Labor.

On September 17, 1977, the Labor Arbiter rendered a decision dismissing the complaint on the ground that the NLRC had no jurisdiction over the case.^[1]

Petitioner then elevated the case to the NLRC which rendered a decision on December 28, 1982, reversing the decision of the Labor Arbiter.^[2]

Dissatisfied with the decision of the NLRC, respondent NHC appealed before this Court and on January 17, 1985, we rendered a decision, the dispositive portion thereof reads as follows:

“WHEREFORE, the petition is hereby GRANTED. The questioned decision of the respondent National Labor Relations Commission is SET ASIDE. The decision of the Labor Arbiter dismissing the case before it for lack of jurisdiction is REINSTATED.”^[3]

On January 6, 1989, petitioner filed with the Civil Service Commission a complaint for illegal dismissal, with preliminary mandatory injunction.^[4]

On February 6, 1989, respondent NHC moved for the dismissal of the complaint on the ground that the Civil Service Commission has no jurisdiction over the case.^[5]

On April 11, 1989, the Civil Service Commission issued an order dismissing the complaint for lack of jurisdiction. It ratiocinated that:

"The Board finds the comment and/or motion to dismiss meritorious. It was not disputed that NHC is a government corporation without an original charter but organized/created under the Corporate Code.

Article IX, Section 2 (1) of the 1987 Constitution provides:

'The civil service embraces all branches, subdivisions, instrumentalities and agencies of the government, including government owned and controlled corporations with original charters.' (underscoring supplied)

From the aforequoted constitutional provision, it is clear that respondent NHC is not within the scope of the civil service and is therefore beyond the jurisdiction of this board. Moreover, it is pertinent to state that the 1987 Constitution was ratified and became effective on February 2, 1987.

WHEREFORE, for lack of jurisdiction, the instant complaint is hereby dismissed."^[6]

On April 28, 1989, petitioner filed with respondent NLRC a complaint for illegal dismissal with preliminary mandatory injunction against respondent NHC.^[7]

On May 21, 1990, respondent NLRC thru Labor Arbiter Manuel R. Caday ruled that petitioner was illegally dismissed from his employment by respondent as there was evidence in the record that the criminal case against him was purely fabricated, prompting the trial court to dismiss the charges against him. Hence, he concluded that the dismissal was illegal as it was devoid of basis, legal or factual.

He further ruled that the complaint is not barred by prescription considering that the period from which to reckon the reglementary period of four years should be from the date of the receipt of the decision of the Civil Service Commission promulgated on April 11, 1989. He also ratiocinated that:

"It appears x x x complainant filed the complaint for illegal dismissal with the Civil Service Commission on January 6, 1989 and the same was dismissed on April 11, 1989 after which on April 28, 1989, this case was filed by the complainant. Prior to that, this case was ruled upon by the Supreme Court on January 17, 1985 which enjoined the complainant to go to the Civil Service Commission which in fact, complainant did. Under the circumstances, there is merit on the contention that the running of the reglementary period of four (4) years was suspended with the filing of the complaint with the said Commission. Verily, it was not the fault of the respondent for failing to file the complaint as alleged by the respondent but due to, in the words of the complainant, a 'legal knot' that has to be untangled."^[8]

Thereafter, the Labor Arbiter rendered a decision, the dispositive portion of which reads:

"Premises considered, judgment is hereby rendered declaring the dismissal of the complainant as illegal and ordering the respondent to