

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM "BILL"
CASAMO

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 2, 2009

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Mr. William "Bill" Casamo, community activist, human rights leader, and U.S. Veteran. Bill lived the kind of full, robust life we all hope to live, leaving us at the distinguished age of 92 on October 21, 2009, at his beloved home in Alexandria, Virginia.

Mr. Casamo was a proud veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a one-man force throughout the modern American labor movement. His deeply held values and experiences truly reflect the best of what the "Greatest Generation" had to offer our nation.

Bill was the second child of immigrant parents, Hilda Johanson from Norway and Anthony Casamo from Sicily. In 1921, in an effort to provide a better life for their family outside bustling New York City, they moved to Patterson, NY. Early in his childhood, Mr. Casamo demonstrated the strong work ethic that would carry him throughout his life. During his summers in Patterson he worked at local restaurants, slaughterhouses and meat packing plants to help support his family. In 1943, he enlisted with the U.S. Marine Corps, leaving behind his wife and first child to fight in World War II. Mr. Casamo served honorably in the Pacific Theater until his discharge in February 1946.

After the war ended, Mr. Casamo began what would be a lifelong dedication to the American labor movement. The map of his career truly traces the rise of labor throughout our country. His first union job came at the early age of 20 when he was elected a union representative at a meat packing plant in New York. Over the next half-century he dedicated himself to numerous union organizations, including the United Furniture Workers Union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFSCME, the International Industrial Engineers, and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Papermill Workers, which later became the International Brotherhood of Papermill Workers, IBPW. He retired in 1985 as the Director of the Retiree Affairs Department for IBPW. Mr. Casamo has always been proud of his work, often penning a Labor Day message to express his gratefulness for the courage, fortitude and vision of American workers. The same can be said of a nation's gratefulness for Mr. Casamo.

Bill Casamo will be deeply missed. He set the standard as an exemplary individual who spent his life fighting to make a better life for his family and for his brothers and sisters in the labor movement. He is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, Eileen Casamo, 4 children, 16 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. Bill will be missed, but his warmth, kindness and strength of character will be remembered always.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 2, 2009

Mr. CONAWAY. Madam Spaker, on rollcall No. 828—Flake Amendment, had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

CHINESE HUMAN RIGHTS ATTORNEYS TESTIFY BEFORE THE TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 2, 2009

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues to the following testimonies of two Chinese human rights attorneys who submitted testimony for a hearing last week of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

[Written Testimony submitted to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on the rule of law in China, Oct. 29, 2009]

BY CRACKING DOWN ON HERESIES, THE GOVERNMENT REDUCES VENUES FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS

(By Mr. Wang Guangze)

From May 2006 to July 2007, I was working as Beijing-based editor and commentator for the magazine Phoenix Weekly, a subsidiary operation of Phoenix Satellite TV. During that period of time, I had tried to make some reports on the status of religious freedom. Phoenix Satellite TV and its subsidiary magazine Phoenix Weekly were registered in Hong Kong, but due to their pro-CPC features, the CPC gave them the special permission to set up a reporter's station in Beijing and recruit employees. The restrictions on its scope of news reporting are rather lax as compared with other media outlets in mainland China. This is also the main reason why this witness was able to report on religious cases, while other media outlets in China had no such right to report on related content during the same period of time.

The religious case of "Three Grades of Servants" was published in the eleventh issue of Phoenix Weekly in 2006, in a Chinese article of as many as 11,000 characters. The entire report consisted of three articles: "An underground church and sixteen cases involving death," "Xu Wenku and his religious kingdom," and "Religious reality in a rural village." The entire report was written by two journalists, Deng Fei and Liu Zhiming, after they conducted interviews. They were notified by a witness, who also gave guidance on conducting interviews. In the end, I edited on the articles and published them.

Through investigations and interviews, we found that the mainland Chinese Public Security department and prosecution department accused "Three Grades of Servants," a Christian church under the management of Xu Wenku, of carrying out an order to murder twenty members of another Christian house church that called itself "the Lighting in the Orient." Both police and prosecution agencies believed that the two parties not only had the motive of competing for the recruitment of believers, but that there were also conflicts between their religious creeds. After the case was cracked, mainland Chinese police effectively cracked down upon

this type of mutual hate-killings between different religious factions, stopping this kind of hate-killing from spreading. In the meantime, mainland police also destroyed the religious activities of the two house churches. According to estimates, the religious belief of tens of thousands of people's may have been affected.

According to the indictment, Xu Wenku and others swindled people out of 20.5 million RMB in various parts of mainland China by illegally hiring believers and collecting contributions, etc. At the beginning of 2007, Xu Wenku and other core members of "Three Grades of Servants" Church were sentenced to death and were immediately executed.

Through investigations and interviews, we believe that the relatively secluded venues for religious activities in rural areas have given rise to religious heresies or have led some people to be engaged in illegal activities in the name of religion. On the other hand, mainland police, while cracking down on heresies, also take the opportunity to destroy venues for religious activities in rural areas, reducing the number of venues for villagers' religious activities. I believe that mainland police have failed to distinguish the normal religious activities from the illegal and criminal behavior in the religious activities that should be cracked down. As a result, the religious environment in the countryside continues to deteriorate and has entered into a sort of vicious cycle: While cracking down on heresies, the venues for religious activities were reduced. After the venues for religious activities were reduced, the religious activities of villagers were forced to be more secret, and secret religious activities often tend to nourish the creation of heresies and varying degrees of illegal religious activities.

For more evidence, please view the following relevant report at: <http://www.boxun.com/hero/wanggz/>.

[Written Testimony submitted to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on the rule of law in China, Oct. 29, 2009]

EXPECTING THE SECOND TRANSFORMATION OF CHINA'S RELIGIOUS POLICIES

(By Mr. Cao Zhi)

1. FOUR STAGES OF RELIGIOUS POLICIES IN CHINA

1. In the 1950s before the Cultural Revolution, the system of administration of religions was formed. The basic characteristics of the system were that the religious organizations were politicized, were classified under the administration as a "work unit," and everything in terms of religious life was simplified. In 1978, after the Cultural Revolution, the political program of the country turned to the "priority of economic development" from the "class struggle." In March 1982, "Basic Viewpoints and Basic Policies of Religious Issues of Our Country During the Period of Socialism" (i.e. Document No. 19) was promulgated. This was the first transformation of religious policies in China. On the one hand, this document required the restoration of religious activities held by religious organizations at sites designated for religious activities. On the other hand, however, the predominant idea was that "class struggles still exist within certain areas," and it confined the religious activities within the "normal limits." In 1982, Article 36 of the Constitution, essentially the "Clause on Religious Belief," was formulated based on the religious policies defined in Document 19. With its promulgation, the state now must recognize what it considers "normal religious activities," while at the same time, it must prohibit or crack down on religious activities outside its control. The idea of "the state protects normal religious activities" must be interpreted in the context of this contradiction.