

February 6, 1969

Mr. James Byrne
Director, Peace Corps/Palau
Koror, Palau District 96940

Dear Mr. Byrne:

This will acknowledge receipt of an undated petition signed by certain Peace Corps Volunteers in the Palau District urging me to reconsider my position on the eminent domain bill passed by the Congress of Micronesia.

The Peace Corps Handbook offers the following advice to Peace Corps Volunteers (pages 24 to 26):

"Especially make sure to keep out of host country politics. Think carefully about your conduct with respect to host country officials. One of the concepts at the very heart of the Peace Corps is the avoidance of any involvement in political movements or ideologies. The Peace Corps' commitment is not to the political forces of a nation but to its people, and its responsibility is to the agencies of government through which the people can be assisted -- no matter who is in control of that government. A Volunteer may develop personal sympathies for one faction or another in the host country, but any active expression of these sympathies, particularly in time of crisis when world-wide attention may be focusing on his area of assignment, would seriously compromise his position and that of the entire Peace Corps.

"Remember also that the vagaries of international affairs may make it necessary for the United States to take a policy stance which directly affects your host country relationships. One of the most important characteristics of the Peace Corps has been the ability of Volunteers, at such times, to continue doing their jobs regardless of their own or host country opinions of United States policy of the moment: there has been no better evidence of the genuine commitment of the United States to humanitarian principles."

Sincerely yours,

William R. Norwood
High Commissioner

cc: Director, Office of Territories
Director, Peace Corps/Micronesia