

12
57

Remarks made by Senator Francisco T. Palacios of the Mariana Islands District on July 28, 1970, relative to the Political Status Issue.

Mr. President, as an elected representative of the Marianas District, I believe that I should take note of the fact that a substantial number of my constituents have expressed themselves in favor of a political status other than free association with the United States. A poll taken last November indicated that many residents of the Marianas favor a more binding relationship with the United States than is offered by free association.

I, however, continue to support the goal of a self-governing Micronesia in free association with the United States. I believe that this status is in the best interests of the people of the Marianas and that I would be poorly serving the people if I did not support this status.

As members of the Congress of Micronesia, we both represent our people and protect their interests. We represent them by working towards the objectives they seek and by supporting the values that they hold dear. But, in order to protect their interests, we must resist the temptation to achieve an easy popularity by supporting proposals that may look attractive but are, in reality, not in the public interest. I maintain that the United States offer of Commonwealth may look attractive, but that when my constituents have come to evaluate it, they will join me in urging its rejection, and in endorsing a relationship of free association with the United States.

I believe that my constituents want personal liberty, political freedom, democratic government, peace, and friendship with the United States. I believe that these can be best obtained through free association between Micronesia and the United States.

Free association would keep the destiny of Micronesia in Micronesian hands, whereas Commonwealth would place our destiny in the hands of the United States. Under free association, Micronesia would have a constitution adopted by the Micronesians and designed to suit our own particular circumstances. Our Government's laws and its policies would be designed to meet our needs. We, the people of Micronesia, would be able to develop our economy, to plan our educational systems and manage our Government as we thought best.

Under free association, we would also maintain our friendship with the United States. Free association would be a relationship between friends. The rights and privileges granted to Micronesia by the United States, and to the United States by Micronesia, would be spelled out in the original compact of association. The terms of our friendship would be clear, from the beginning. And, if the interests of either friend changed, the compact could be changed, or, if necessary, ended. Free association enables us to continue our friendship with the United States but it permits us to reevaluate the relationship from time to time. It gives future generations the opportunity to renew the friendship, to move closer to, or

Other way from the United States. It leaves the decision in their hands.

I firmly believe that the United States will eventually accept a relationship of free association between the United States and Micronesia. How could it be otherwise? Their ancestors recognized the need for liberty when they rejected foreign rule. They recognized that people must be able to respond to their own needs, to protect their own values. For twenty-five years Americans have taught us about democracy, self-determination, self-government. It is now time for us to practice what they have taught. Now it is up to us to make clear to the people of the United States that we have learned our lesson: that we want to be a free people in a relationship of free association with another free people.

Next, let me speak briefly about the Commonwealth proposal presented by the delegation headed by Assistant Secretary Loesch. The Commonwealth proposal may seem attractive at first glance. If the Commonwealth proposal were accepted, it would give us somewhat more self-government than we now have and it would provide some economic advantages.

But, Mr. President, when we examine the Commonwealth proposal more closely, we discover that it has a number of fatal limitations. The constitution and the laws of Micronesia would have to be consistent with the constitution and laws of the United States. Our situation here is different from that of the United States, but our laws would have to be similar even though, as a result, they might clash with the reality of life in Micronesia.

Secondly, under the Commonwealth proposal, United States citizens would be able to buy our lands so that, in time, non-Micronesians might own much of the land and would dominate our economy.

Third, the United States Government would retain the power of eminent domain -- a power that would leave the people of every island in Micronesia in fear that their land and their homes might be taken by the United States for military purposes. The Commonwealth proposal would put every citizen of Micronesia in permanent danger of loss of land, in peacetime as well as in war.

Finally, the people of Micronesia would have no power to change their status. The Commonwealth proposal would end things, once and for all. If we accepted the Commonwealth status we would have reached the end of the road. Future generations of Micronesians would have to live with the Commonwealth status, whether they liked it or not.

Why, it may be asked, did the Loesch Delegation present a proposal so inconsistent with the political traditions of a freedom-loving nation like the United States? -- a proposal that would deny the people of Micronesia so many of the freedoms that the people of the United States consider essential to their own nation?

The answer, I think, is fairly simple. The Loesch Delegation was concerned, above all else, with the United States military interest in our

islands. In its desire to protect this military interest, it allowed itself to forget the primary importance of freedom, not only to Micronesia, but to America. In its concern with the strategic aspect of the Trusteeship, it compromised, or neglected, the primary purpose of the Trusteeship ...to guide Micronesia to genuine self-government.

Mr. President, I am sure we all recognize that the military interest of United States is important to the protection of the United States. The United States military interest has been a governing factor in this whole Trusteeship; it underlies the offer of Commonwealth; and it will continue, even if, as seems likely, the Congress rejects this offer of Commonwealth. The United States will still want to have access to Micronesia for strategic purposes and it will still want, even more, to deny such access to any other power.

Let the United States protect itself. But let it not seek -- as did the Loesch Delegation -- to protect itself at the expense of Micronesia's basic rights. The Loesch Delegation's proposal attempted to protect the United States military and strategic interest in the manner most satisfactory to the Defense Department. Well then, Mr. President, it is the duty of this Congress to protect the interests of Micronesia. Through free association we can do this and also satisfy the interests of the United States.

If we are firm in our advocacy of self-government in free association with the United States, I believe that our voices will be heard and that the future of Micronesia will be secure.

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