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Remarks made by Vice-President Olympio T. Borja, senior Senator from the Mariana Islands District, on August 3, 1970, relative to the Political Status Issue.

Mr. President, the deliberations of the Congress and of the Senate during the past weeks have focused the eyes of the world community upon Micronesia. The question of future political status for Micronesia, which has been the center of our attention for the past weeks, has been sharpened by stirring speeches, discussions, and debates.

The Congress and the people of Micronesia should give due recognition to the members of our Political Status Delegation for a thorough study and investigation into the practical, political, and constitutional alternatives open to Micronesia and its people. The members of the Delegation deserve our gratitude and commendation for the real dedication, devotion, and efforts brought to bear on their task and for the excellence of their Report and the specificity of their findings.

But the fact of this Delegation's Report, coupled with the events of the past weeks, compels me to express the circumstances of my Marianas constituency for whom I represent their common interest and to voice their sentiments respecting the question of future political status for the people of Micronesia.

It is of some concern to me that this Congress, having received the Delegation Report, would presume to decide a specific political status alternative agreeable to it and to advocate such alternative to the general public. It appears to me that, once the practical alternatives have been investigated, examined, and identified, the Micronesian electorate should be given the prerogative and the opportunity to decide for itself by due constitutional process the particular status it wants and desires.

Several months ago, the people of the Mariana Islands District conducted a plebiscite to determine their political status preference. The results of that plebiscite clearly indicated the wishes of the majority to become permanently associated with the United States. In the past few days, I have had the opportunity to consult with the local leaders and representatives of my district, and I wish to report their continuing support and desire to press for a permanent relationship with the United States.

The history of foreign domination, subjugation and influence is nowhere more pronounced and more lasting and far-reaching in effects than here in the Mariana Islands District. That history has deeply conditioned the thinking of my constituents and the realities and limitations of our islands in Micronesia. The size of our population in comparison with other developing countries is insignificantly small; the geographic dispersion of our islands over such a vast expanse of Pacific Ocean makes any realistic and effective transportation and communication network an unachievable goal to hope for with our meager capital and natural resources, unless outside assistance is continually available; the diversity of our cultures threatens the very weaving of our political fabric of unity as one body politic. The "Micronesian identity" which we have nurtured over the years

throughout the length and breadth of Micronesia is invariably compromised by the fact that, in this day and age, and despite the hue and cry of developing nations for nationalism, the nations of the world are now speaking more and more in favor of world community and cooperation and against artificial political barriers and national selfish interests. These international trends for world community and regions are evidenced in the very concept of the United Nations, the European Common Market, the Alliance for Progress, and here in the Pacific, the South Pacific Commission. These are the signs of times which have greatly influenced the desires of my constituents to seek a closer association with the people and Government of the United States.

In reviewing the Delegation's Report on the various practical political alternatives open to the people of Micronesia -- free association, independence, and Commonwealth -- my constituents are persuaded by the advantages available under the alternative of a Commonwealth status. This alternative takes into account the realities and the unique situation and circumstances of Micronesia and its people. It is the consensus of my electorate that the Commonwealth proposal offers essential features that will make Micronesia economically viable, permanently secured, and at the same time provide our people with adequate safeguard for self-government and control of their internal affairs. We are fully aware that the Commonwealth proposal as currently presented by the United States Delegation does not completely satisfy our aspirations, needs, and desires for a more viable and self-sustaining Micronesia. I find that there exists a consensus among us to preserve, maintain, and continue the good will and friendly relationship between the United States and Micronesia. I also find a consensus among us that if it is at all possible Micronesia wants continued technical and economic assistance to come from the United States. It is, therefore, somewhat difficult for me to understand why our political status could not be decided in the light of such desirable objectives and goals. The United States has certainly told us that such a political partnership is available for Micronesia and the specifics of such a political tie could be worked out on mutually agreeable terms. If this is the case, why would we close off such an offer and call it an impasse? I fear that for this Congress to reject the United States proposal for a Commonwealth status as unacceptable will foreclose the possibility of our scrutinizing the merits of such a proposal. We in the Marianas community do not find the Commonwealth proposal altogether unacceptable. We are somewhat flattered by this interest of the United States in Micronesia and perhaps a little embarrassed. We are not quite sure Micronesia entirely deserves it.

Lately, there have been considerable criticisms on the fatal limitations of the Commonwealth proposal. Most, if not all, of these criticisms center around the fear that acceptance of the Commonwealth proposal would compromise the Micronesians' inalienable rights to their lands, cultural values and social mores. It is further alleged that the presence of the United States Armed Forces in some of our islands would prostitute our Micronesian way of life. Moreover, it is claimed that the future generations of Micronesians would be deprived of the opportunity to elect a different status if Commonwealth status is agreed upon now. These fears, Mr. President, totally lack substantiation. They can only be entertained by those who would naively study the question and by those who have not

learned from the history of the world, the evolution of western civilization, and the basic concept underpinning democratic institutions. The underlying justifications for a free association status which our Status Delegation found to be the best of the three possible political status alternatives for Micronesia could be protected to a much greater degree than the free associated status the Delegation so nobly structured and recommended to us.

The United States Federal system of government was conceived for the protection and safeguards of the rights of the people in the United States - which rights we in Micronesia now would like to assure for ourselves and for our children. The Bill of Rights, as we know them today, was blazed in historical trails of world civilization to protect the governed from abuses of their own government. The security of the people to their lands, their other property, their person and their privacy constitute the basic foundation upon which the democratic institution is built. The Federal Constitution has survived and endured the tests of time and has made possible the creation of a "family" of sovereign states -- a union bound together for a common purpose. This union which we call the "United States of America" has become the mightiest and richest nation in the world. A family whose foundation is built upon the democratic principles that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The Commonwealth proposal invites us to become a member of this family and not just a friend. But just as family members possess certain rights, so must each of them carry out certain obligations. Among these obligations is the duty to make allowance for use of lands for common security and strategic purposes. This need does not arise out of design by the United States nor by accident. It arises out of the very nature of security, protection, and self-preservation. The defense of the United States necessarily implies the survival of all freedom-loving people of the world. I would like to see Micronesia become the vanguard for freedom and for peace and security.

I do not agree with some of my distinguished colleagues in Congress that the Commonwealth status is the end of the road. The people of my district consider the status of Commonwealth to be a detour around the roadblock of political status which will release the energies of our people and turn them upon the achievement of the deep, if less dramatic, freedoms gained by self-reliance, education, security, economic fairness, administrative skill, and productivity. Eventually, it will bring forth the political inventiveness which will lead us to the creation of a new form of political status sired by the democratic institution of the world. The Commonwealth status proposed by the United States calls for a voluntary association of peoples of different historical origin -- the people of the United States and the people of Micronesia. It further provides for a close bond of common market, common currency, common defense, and common ideals of democracy.

These, Mr. President, are benefits that Micronesia will stand to gain if Commonwealth status is accepted. I believe that under Commonwealth status there is hope and a future for Micronesia. There is hope for economic opportunities and prosperity; there is hope for a college education for

our children and grandchildren; there is hope for the opportunity to live under a democratic system as free men where our government is truly the servant of our people and responsive to their needs.

We in the Marianas community take the position that the Commonwealth proposal offers us at least a better fighting chance against poverty, disease, hunger, and crime. It contains features that are more in tune with the realities of life of our society. We recognize full well that Commonwealth is not the ultimate choice that will foreclose all doors to future change should it become necessary. We have reason to believe that other political status alternatives as are available now will continue to remain open for future Micronesian generations to choose.

We should not, therefore, foreclose the continuance of our dialogue with the United States for an acceptable and honorable future political status for Micronesia. Let us consider the merits and demerits of all the alternatives of political status available to us. Disagreements in any negotiation are bound to occur, but to shut our eyes against the painful realities of our situation will not bring about the political status acceptable to all of us.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to reiterate that the final decision on the future political status question remains a decision to be made by the people of Micronesia through a plebiscite. It behooves this Congress to take specific steps to inform our people of the important issues surrounding our future political status. This Congress can do no less.

Building a nation, Mr. President, is not an easy task. The decisions we make during this session of the Congress will have an indelible influence in the outcome of the plebiscite on the status question by our constituency. I would like to urge that in our doings here, this Congress does not lose sight of the realities of life in Micronesia.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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