

PANGELINAN:
"SECURE AND CLOSE"

Ambassador Williams, members of the United States delegation, and honored guests:

On behalf of the Marianas Political Status Commission, it is my pleasure to welcome you here to continue the deliberations which we began last December looking toward a close political relationship between the people of the Marianas and the United States.

As you know, each member of this Commission approaches this solemn assignment with a full sense of personal responsibility. Each of us may have a different background or different constituents, but the members of this Commission are united in their determination to do what is best for the people of the Marianas. We cannot escape--or delegate--this responsibility. Nor do we want to. The development of a new political status for the people of the Marianas--in a secure and close political relationship with the United States--is a challenge worthy of any man's abilities and best efforts. The Commission accepts this challenge with enthusiasm.

I can assure you that the members of this Commission have prepared

diligently for this session of negotiations. We have already delivered two detailed position papers to you on the subjects of political status and economics. The Commission looks forward to your careful consideration of these papers and the opportunity to explore them further with you in our working sessions. The Commission is continuing its deliberations on other important matters and other position papers may be prepared. We have assumed that this method of preparation would assist in making these negotiations concrete and mutually productive. I am con-

fident that our initial working sessions will confirm our expectations in this regard.

The members of this Commission are well aware of the complexities involved in these negotiations. We recognize that there are areas where agreement will come easily and others where the differences will seem at first glance to be insurmountable. I can assure you that this Commission is prepared to discuss all issues with an open mind and to negotiate in good faith. We are not looking for deceptively simple solutions to difficult problems. Neither our constituents nor our

descendants would tolerate such action by this Commission. Our report must go to the District Legislature and then to the people of the Marianas. Every member of this Commission wants to be able to defend the product of our negotiations with confidence and pride. Our work together in these negotiations can produce an agreement which will bring honor to your government and enable the people of the Marianas to achieve in full measure the democratic ideals long symbolized by the United States of America.