

In Tinian Hearings, Air Special Concerns

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involves the relocation of San Jose, the island's only village. The military also wants to use about two-thirds of Tinian, rather than the one-third it now holds as retention land.

The joint committee was also asked to lend a hand in getting the homestead program rolling again on Tinian. The allocation of public lands to be farmed by Tinian residents has suddenly been suspended, said Diaz, although there are about 85 homestead applicants waiting for land in the Marpi Valley and old village areas.

"The homestead program is where it is today," said Tinian Mayor Antonio S. Borja, "because of one council member and not because of our district administrator or high commissioner." The accusation was later interpreted as having been directed at the defeated council speaker, Felipe Mendiola.

A slightly different interpretation came from Sen. Andon Amaraich of Truk, a joint committee member, who related the homestead suspension to the military's desires of getting what it wants on Tinian.

This is another of those decisions made in Washington, said Amaraich, "and as you know, when things are directed by Washington it is very difficult to untangle them, especially when they involve the interests of the United States.

"I do not want to hold out any hope," he added, "because many things are beyond the control of the committee and the Congress of Micronesia."

"The people of Tinian are the rightful owners of Tinian," said Serafina King, an unsuccessful candidate in the June Municipal council election. "We must have the right to have our homesteads before there is any discussion of giving our land to the military."

Support Seen

Despite the stumbling blocks in the Marianas negotiations, principally over the military's plans for Tinian, the people of this island who attended the hearing seemed unwavering in their support for the Marianas Political Status Commission. "I doubt the commission would negotiate something that would be detrimental to the people of Tinian," said Ms. King.

"I'm sure the commission has the best interests of Tinian in mind," seconded Salii, "and so does the joint committee."

The committee's first choice for a new political status for Micronesia, Salii explained, "would be independence - if we could be economically independent. As we can't be now, we must look for a status that will give us internal self-government but also provide us with some economic support."

Said Ms. King, "You've only mentioned the advantages of free association," which is the proposed status favored by the joint committee. "What are some of the disadvantages?"

Salii enumerated some.

One, the United Nations will no longer be required to review the performance of the administering authority.

"As a small nation," he said, "we will have to deal on equal

home. I also saw Sen. (Ambilos) Ieshi and another gentleman conversing in Ponapean, and that too made me feel happy and at home. And maybe there are some people here who speak Trukese and can talk to me, and others who speak Palauan and Marshallese and can talk with our other committee members.

"But when I came into this building tonight," Amaraich went on, "the first thing I saw was a newspaper clipping on the bulletin board saying 'This is where the planes took off with the first atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.' I got scared after reading that, so I have a question now: What restrictions are you willing to put on the military?"

Vice Speaker Diaz spoke up to explain that the people of Tinian support the military for economic reasons, although they did become alarmed enough to reconsider their original support when they heard the military wanted "all" of Tinian.

'This Is Your Land'

"You have all the rights to make the decision about your future status," said Rep. Ataji Balos. "I will support you in whatever you choose. This is your land. If you want the military to use it, it's your own business.

"Now I'd like to share some of my experiences with the military," said Balos, who represents the Marshalls in the Congress. "I'm sure there are good things about bringing in the military, such as economic development, jobs, public works projects. But you're going to face some problems too.

"You've probably heard of the people in the Marshalls who have been removed from their islands to places where they are strangers. They don't have the right to refuse the military and they are compensated on the military's terms."

Balos went on to describe further problems the Marshallese have had with the after-effects of radioactive fallout from atomic testing. He also cited the landowners of Kwajelein, who have leased their lands for 99 years and now can't go into Kwajelein "without a military identification."

"I know that some of these things may happen to the people here if the military comes," added Balos.

"The saving grace for the people of this island and all of Micronesia," said Salii in concluding the hearing, "is that neither this committee nor the Marianas Political Status Commission will make the final choice of status for you.

"But it is our job to help you define what you really want."

Today the joint committee meets on Saipan with the Marianas Political Status Commission and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce. Tomorrow it has scheduled sessions with the Marianas District Legislature, municipal officials and a public hearing beginning at 7:30 p.m.

economically and educationally.

Three, the relationship can be terminated.

"The U.S. can think," said Salii, "why should we give you a lot of assistance when in the future you can tell us to go home from Micronesia?"

"One of the disadvantages also," said Sen. Edward DLG. Pangelinan, "is that under free association the U.S. would have the responsibility for external affairs while responsibility for internal affairs will be Micronesia's." Pangelinan, a member of the joint committee, is chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission.

"That depends on whether you see that as a plus or minus," added Salii.

'Salesman' Approach

Contracting the close, permanent commonwealth relationship supported by the Marianas with the looser, terminable status favored by the joint committee, Sen. John Mangefel of Yap said, "I'm sorry if I could like a salesman. If you people want me to leave, get out, I will.

"But if you have a political status that you can't terminate," said Mangefel, "it's like putting a child in a house and locking the door. I like to leave the door open. Then if the house starts to leak, you can get out."

Other joint committee members also turned salesmen on the subject before the people of Tinian, about 40 of whom listened raptly during the hearing.

"Do you want to remain under the same political status with the Marianas even if it means moving San Jose village?" asked Amaraich. "And even if it means stopping the homestead program? And even if it means that the military will take not only the retention area but other areas on Tinian? Or even if it means taking half of Tinian and giving it to the military?"

When there was no direct response, Amaraich continued, subtly pursuing the theme of Micronesian unity favored by his colleagues.

"When I arrived I saw Sen. Mangefel and some others conversing in Yapese," Amaraich said. "That made me feel at