

OCTOBER 19, 1973

MARIANAS VARIETY NEWS AND VIEWS

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The right of every individual to express an opinion is an inherent blessing found in any society that believes in a democratic form of government. I feel that an elected and extremely influential political leader telling his constituents to literally shut up (or else) because they differ in their opinions represents a sad epilogue in the early development of a democratic government for our islands and people.

I am speaking about the Honorable Senator Olympio Borja whose response to my letter was peppered with irrelevant statements and incongruous remarks of the issues involved. Mr. Dela Cruz, if one may recall, resorted to the same childish tactic when I wrote a letter questioning the findings of the Special District Legislature Committee to investigate the Audit Report of the Legislature.

I can easily understand Mr. Dela Cruz's irresponsible statements, but to have those statements repeated by a top-ranking citizen is inexcusable. I do not see any relationship between my professional training as a hydrologist and my opinions on controversial issues such as the Audit Report and Mr. Borja's purchasing of a piece of land on Tinian for \$85,000 while the Political Status negotiations are underway. I questioned the land transactions on Tinian by our co-

money. Perhaps, to Mr. Borja, the status talks are only a game and that public funds appropriated for yearly operations can be continued indefinitely with no benefits to the people. How many more rounds of talks are needed in order to arrive at a viable agreement with the U.S.? With so many complex issues to consider including land, no one can reasonably make a prediction.

As land is undoubtedly the most vital issue surrounding the talks and will be the determining factor on whether or not the U.S. government will "adopt" us into its "political family", does it not stand to reason then that land problems must be kept as simple as possible in order to avoid a major breakdown of the talks? The involvement of commission members in the Tinian land grab and the admission of Senator Borja that it's okay will certainly show the U.S. that the talks are being regarded by our people as simply a fruitless exercise of fulfilling impossible dreams. The moratorium on Tinian has been "clearly" established to be "unilateral" as Mr. Borja had personally helped to "clear the air" through Ambassador Williams own admission of the U.S. government role. I still seriously doubt the embarrassing admission of the U.S. on its role on the moratorium, but then again, I view the admission as a convenient and expedient manner to solve the controversy and protect the integrity of future political status talks and its members. What if it was actually through the Marianas Political Status Commission's recommendation that moratorium was imposed on Tinian? The consequence will be so disastrous to the status talks that no member involved will be willing to face up to it.

Now down to some major disagreements on Mr. Borja's

mission members and not only Senator Borja, simply because I believe that their actions will be detrimental to any success to be expected of the political status talks. Our leaders keep saying that the Marianas people want to be a part of the "U.S. political family". But I'll be damned if the U.S. will actually be so naive to entertain our people's aspiration when they know that elements of profiteering and "bad faith" surround the current status negotiations.

I am not questioning Senator Borja's "constitutional right" (although we don't have a constitution) to own land in the Marianas including Tinian. What I am questioning is the propriety of the transaction under the present circumstance and himself being a member of the Commission.

I am not out to get any particular individual or average anything in the past, for I do not believe that problems are solved that way. My objective was to conduct an intelligent discussion of potential public issues that I feel will affect the status question one way or the other. The fact that the politicians are the ones more seriously involved and affected makes it difficult to explain the issues without mentioning names.

Mr. Borja pointed out that other commission members also purchased land on Tinian recently. This is good for our people to know. He further stated that "there is nothing wrong in their purchase or ownership of land, even if they are members of the Marianas Political Status Commission." I would like the Chairman and other members to take a vote on this.

If Mr. Borja seriously believes that the purchase of land on Tinian by status members while the talks are going on is all right, then I for one will recommend that the talks be stopped for the simple reason that the talks will amount to nothing more than an endless exercise of proposals and counter proposals and on top of that, a deliberate waste of public

response to my letter.
 1) I still maintain that the land purchased by Senator Borja for \$85,000 was probably a falsified transaction not requiring any cash exchange. Who in his right mind will buy land worth 15,000 dollars, a week ago, for \$85,000? Common sense tells me that some poor landowner got a real bad deal as the first sale was for only \$15,000. Other commission members may have bought land on Tinian, but I doubt if any have turned right
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around and resold it for an inflated price thereby establishing a faked value. There is no established fair market value of any land in the Marianas. Land prices are arbitrary and the current practice is to sell the land to the highest bidder. This is one area where legislation is badly needed to protect the local citizens from being subjects of exorbitant land prices should they want to buy land. I expressed my feelings in writing to the Congress of Micronesia on this problem during its February 1973 session, but nothing was done. All I got from our Marianas Delegation was "it was a good letter and something should be done".

I did not question the legality of the land purchase of Senator Borja. As a matter of fact, I did emphasize that it was legally done. The fact that the value of the land has been established and the fact that it is now public record will make it clear beyond doubt that the subject land can be resold for the legally established price tag of \$85,000. Who is to prevent the landowners on Tinian from following Senator Borja's legal maneuvering, example in establishing a "fair market" value of their land for the purpose of selling or leasing? It is a fairly simple matter to file a "deed of sale" of land at the Clerk of Courts. And it is even more simple to put any price on the land. Nobody is required to show evidence of cash or other payments to land sold or bought.

2) "Influx of illegal foreign capital into the Marianas". If Senator Borja will recall, my letter to the Congress of Micronesia last February had to do with

facing our water system are being corrected through the combined efforts of the District and Headquarters Public Works, and the private contractor who is doing the replacement of water distribution pipelines and meter installation in most of the villages. In the meantime, everybody will have to live with the problems until the construction work is completed. I am sorry about the water hours and the rumors about water contamination. I too boil my water, but I don't let the whole world know about it. I try to be patient because I understand the circumstance, and I hope Senator Borja does too.

Sincerely Yours,

Pete A. Tenorio

Dear Editor,
In response to a letter to the Editor of the Marianas Variety by Mrs. A.B. Gage, tourist, I would like to agree that Saipan is indeed a beautiful island and an "unspoiled Paradise" in that the Saipanese people are able to use their island and THEIR public beaches as they see fit.
It is too bad that a traveler like you expects the rest of the world to conform to YOUR USA standards. Had you not been so "disillusioned and disgusted", you may have found that with remarkable hospitality the

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Marianas

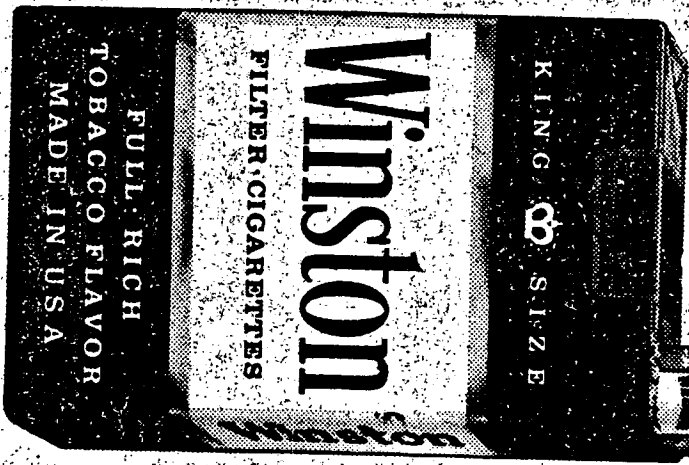
rationality land values brought about by the use of out-
side funds to purchase land through Micronesian fronts.
I made my concern known to him and, as a matter of fact,
had what I thought were sound suggestions.

To ask me to do something about the problem is in ef-
fect delegating his authority and responsibility as an
elected official to me. His command does not make
sense. Why should I look after problems that elected
officials are paid to do themselves? Besides, is it
within my power as a peon to raise hell in the Congress
Chamber about land problems in the Marianas? What are
elected officials for? Were my suggestions to the Con-
gress so completely against their thinking that they
have prompted Senator Borja to tell me to solve the
problems myself?

3) "Picking". I can assure the readers that my
"picking" of Mr. Santos and Senator Borja is such, only
because these individuals are directly involved with
what I feel are areas that need the attention of the
uninformed public. Senator Borja and President Santos
have spent considerable time in public office to have
understood thoroughly the responsibilities of public
officials to the public. If they feel that as elected
officials, their interests are in conflict with the
public's, then they ought to change.

I am disappointed at Senator Borja's belief in which
he indicated that my time and efforts are being spent
to avenge a past failure. I blamed no one and I feel
totally responsible for my defeat as a senatorial can-
didate. I would be the first to admit that I did not
choose to run for the Senate seat to win. I am sure
Senator Borja knew the odds against me. My objective
was to see how many of our people have the guts to vote
the way they want to vote instead of voting the way
they are being told to vote. I'd rather be offensive
and be honest than be a hypocrite and be dishonest.
That was why I did not congratulate Mr. Borja.
For Senator Borja's information, the present problems

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