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Remarks by Senator Tmetuchl
Micronesian Senate - July 31, 1974

Mr. President, my colleagues in the Senate:

I would like this morning to speak about a matter which has been concerning me for several years. This the relationship of the Marianas District to the rest of Micronesia.

Some of you will remember that it was in 1971 that I first spoke in the Senate about this. At that time I argued that the economy and recent history of the Marianas was so different from that of the other districts that it was unrealistic to assume that we would in the end all follow a common course. I do not know how many members agreed with my estimate then, but they did not act upon it in any way.

Neither at that time or now have I felt that the people of the Marianas have taken a wrong or harmful course for themselves or for us.

I was simply saying that Saipan in particular has had a very different history and development than the other districts of Micronesia, and we should accept and recognize that fact.

I also feel it is proper that the members of the Marianas delegation should participate fully in all decisions of this Congress as long as we have a common government.

However, the reality of which I warned three years ago is now upon us; the Marianas are indeed set upon a different course. Yet we are still failing to take the steps which history has, in my opinion, now made mandatory for us. I refer of course, to the participation of the people and leaders of the Marianas in decisions which are of great importance to our future, but not theirs. These are the negotiations over our future political status and the writing of our constitution. By this I do not in any way intend to criticize the positions taken by my distinguished colleagues from the Marianas on the Joint Committee on Future Status. Throughout its history their performance has always been statesmanlike and sensitive to our needs. Nevertheless, there is no longer any more logic to their participation on this committee than if they were members of the legislatures of Guam or even Hawaii. We from the other districts do not participate in their status negotiations for exactly this reason.

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The same is even more true of the Constitutional Convention. We should welcome observers from the Marianas to our convention, but to have delegates from the Marianas actually vote on our form of future government will inevitably make it more difficult to reach a consensus on the proper ways in which to meet our own particular needs.

The future of our government and of our people now depends in important ways on the laws and policies we determine here in this Congress. I hope that with the cooperation of our colleagues from the Marianas we can work out arrangements which will permit us, like them, to determine our own destiny for and by ourselves.

By this, however, I do not mean that we should stop talking with our friends from the Marianas about our joint future. We will be neighbors. We also have a long history of working together, especially during the nine years since the Congress of Micronesia was founded. We will inevitably continue to have close relations of many kinds in the future. What we should be doing now is discussing realistically how we and the Marianas will travel the separate roads we are each mapping for ourselves in cooperation and neighborliness. We cannot do this as long as we pretend that the separate roads do not exist.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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