

Just Want Facts

Rota 'Dissatisfaction' Is Hidden

By Diane Maddex
Daily News Staff Writer

ROTA—What do the people of Rota really want when it comes to their political future? Members of the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status, which tried to find the answer to this question in public hearings on Rota last July, suggested in a report released yesterday:

“...A great number, perhaps as many as 50 per cent, of the people of Rota are dissatisfied with the present course of the Marianas in pursuing separate negotiations with the United States and desire to remain a part of Micronesia if Micronesia opts for a close relationship with the United States which would assure their economic development goals.”

The group recommended that Rota be treated separately from the Marianas when the Micronesian constitutional referendum and national plebiscite are held, and that the Congress consider making Rota permanently a separate administrative district.

Yet, last week, six months after the committee's hearings, any strong anti-Marianas leanings among Rota's people appeared to have been muted, at least publicly. In interviews with residents, discussion of tentative agreements reached so far by the Marianas status negotiators provoked only one wholly negative response. Generally, the Rotanese interviewed seemed beguiled at the prospect of becoming U.S. citizens, of

to vote on under the Marianas agreement.

They are still the “show-me” members of the Marianas family. They want to know how much money Rota will get under a commonwealth status, how many representatives to the new government they will have, in all, how Rota fits in amid the talk of military installations on Ijinan and Saipan, target practice on Farallon de Medinilla, and lump sum grants of U.S. economic assistance.

What most of the people want most, though, is information. The Trust Territory government calls it “education for self-government,” the Congress of Micronesia and the Marianas Political Status Commission call it “political education” but the people of Rota are calling it just plain facts—details on the status alternatives open to them and the agreements already outlined behind closed doors.

“I hesitate to say what I want because I don't have the details,” said librarian Rudy Calvo. “Our lessons so far have been very limited, not the type we can understand. We don't want hearsay or things that are too complicated. But the majority here don't understand what's going on.”

“Why do we have to take this kind of status agreement that's being offered, to us when we could study it more to see what problems are coming?” asked Frank Calvo, a student at the University of Guam.

Calvo, a political science-public administration major, said he would resist a

were put to a vote today. He reasons that he would prefer to see the trusteeship continued, “because I don't think we are prepared. There hasn't been enough education.”

“A lot of people want independence here,” Calvo added, “but we don't have anything to start with. I don't want to see our people suffer if they accept a new status and don't know what to do with it. “I know others share this view. We want to see more details so we can make suggestions.”

“I think our people care. Yet we never see any political education. Our people only know what they see.”

“I just don't know what's going on,” said Elizabeth Sasakura, Rota's postmaster, who also happens to be a U.S. citizen already. “All I know is what I read in the newspapers. But there's just not enough communication from the people heading up the status talks.”

Many people admitted they knew little or nothing of the latest contents of the latest agreements reached by the Marianas and U.S. negotiators. Those who attended a public briefing following the December talks said this was a step in the right direction, but that more person-to-person discussions were needed.

As a start, the Marianas status commission announced last week that its full membership will begin a district-wide set of public meetings in Rota on Jan. 19.

“I have confidence in our

Manglona, the District Administrator's representative on Rota. “I think the people will go ahead with what our leaders tell us, but we have to continue the political education program to let them know what different types of alternatives are available.”

University of Guam-educated Fermin Atalg has a different opinion. “The people negotiating on the status commission are not responsive to the people's wishes. They're just politicians—they're supposed to be responsive, but they're not.”

“I think the educated few

tend to disagree with portions of the talks. Not all, but some. “I support the congress negotiations on behalf of all the districts of Micronesia. We'd have a stronger voice. If we're only one district, we're going to be playing their (U.S.) game, not our own.”

“I don't want to give up my Micronesian citizenship. I'd go to live in the Marshalls.”

“Being a U.S. citizen is not bad. Yeah, I like that idea,” countered John Quitugua, an x-ray and lab technician at Rota's hospital. This sentiment was expressed repeatedly, as the (Continued on page 34)



Ayuda Line

By Eileen McGuire

Ayuda Line will attempt to answer questions, cut red tape or solve problems for you. Write Eileen McGuire at Ayuda Line, Pacific Daily News, Box DN, Agaña, 96910. No phone calls, please.

Q. Please make an inquiry as to why my father, a navy retiree who honorably served his country, has not yet received his veteran's bonus check. Other veterans have already received them and by an act of public law last year, the checks were authorized for release. What seems to be the delay? P.F.M.

A. Veterans Affairs Officer Frank A. Perez could not find your father's name on the first priority list for bonus checks—the list of applicants who were veterans of World War II. If your father is a veteran of the Korean War, which is second in priority, he will have to wait, Perez said, until the Legislature appropriates enough money to cover all the applications the office has received. At the present time, he added, the appropriation is not even enough to take care of the WWII veterans.

Q. Are there any recycling programs for used cans and newspapers on the island? I've been here only a short time, but the closet is

Rota's 'Dissatisfaction' May Be Hidden

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people of Rota offered their own interpretations of what advantages would flow from suddenly becoming Americans. To cousins Benita and Ben Atalig, both high school

economic development, easier immigration.
"Right now we have a lack of nurses here," said Loretta Castro, who is one herself. "They keep saying we don't have enough money. Well, if we were part of the U.S., we could get more help than we have now."

"We've been studying Micronesian culture in school," said Atalig. "I know it has diminished with all the changes here, and I guess it will diminish more if we become Americans."
"But wherever I go, I'll always be proud to be Micronesian. I'll be proud to be an American, too."

Q. Atalig, is supporting the calling of a future status referendum on both Rota and Tinian.

Underneath today's public welcome for the icing on the Marianas status agreement, there could exist the "dissatisfaction" the Joint Committee on Future Status said it uncovered in July.

For, at the same time as the people of Rota were embracing the idea of U.S. citizenship, their leaders had before them last week an ordinance requiring any business managed or leased by a non-Micronesian to employ a Rotanese assistant manager.

A source close to Williams disclosed during the December status talks on Saipan that the lush garden island of Rota is Williams' favorite in all the Marianas. Whether he and the Marianas negotiators are able to hold Rota's affection is one more question to be answered.

There is no clear answer now whether the island's landmark "Wedding Cake" rock formation will be inscribed to the Marianas at the fete celebrating the new commonwealth.

WILL BE ANSWERED
IN THE NEXT ISSUE
OF THE P.D.N.

The military base on Tinian, a near certainty under terms of the Marianas agreement reached to date, also brings images of greener pastures for its neighbor Rota. As U.S. Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams has said, with the military on Tinian, Rota could be the "garden island" providing produce for the base.

Vegetables aside, "I don't want it to happen here," said Ms. Castro about the military's use of Tinian. "That's the only thing I feel bad about, turning people out of land they're occupying."

There was reluctance to go into any felt disadvantages of acquiring U.S. citizenship, given the grey area most of Rota's people relegated these to. Again, they "just want the facts."

Sensing a need to go behind public hearings and public interviews to get to the private thoughts of the people of Rota, their representative in the Congress of Micronesia, Felipe Agnew Disbarment Sought

respect of the court for itself and a proper regard for the integrity of the (legal) profession compel us to conclude that the respondent is unfit to continue as a member of the bar of this state," the report said.
The final decision on whether to suspend, disbar, or reprimand the former Maryland governor will be made by the Court of Appeals.

Agnew Disbarment Sought

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the heart of the basic object of the legal profession," the judges, said in their decision.

"We see no extenuating circumstances allowing a lesser sanction," they said in calling for disbarment rather than the suspension Agnew had sought.

"In our opinion, the proper administration of justice, the proper

students, it means a chance to go to school on the Mainland and more job opportunities when they return. To others, it congers up hopes of higher salaries "like the Americans in the TT get now," more

Hospital Funding

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open," Perry noted. "Then, later in the year when the bids have been received, when we know the cost of the hospital unit, the government will decide if it has the cash to use."

Perry also noted that a combination of the three alternative financing avenues could be utilized - "it could be cash in combination of the three," he said.
"The Legislature and Governor's office are working closely in deciding which way they want to go for ultimate financing," he noted.

According to the schedule for hospital - blueprints and construction, "By March, we will be into the working drawing stage - we'll know how the facility will be laid out," noted Ruth. "We've taken into consideration a lot of things about Guam that you normally wouldn't worry about in other places," he noted, citing the

need for an earthquake-proof structure, and for special weatherproofing considerations.
The projected date for hospital operation is late 1976 or early 1977.

The site for the new GMH facility has been set at what is the current Department of Agriculture complex in Mangilao. Although plans for a new site for the DOA facility have not been finalized, Ruth noted that the Department of Agriculture may move to the Ordot area.

The current GHM building in Tamuning is also awaiting announcement of its fate. According to Ruth, there are several rumors regarding the structure's future use - "it might go to the Department of Public Safety, or for a psychiatric facility or prison, or it might be sold to help pay for the new hospital," he noted.

The latter possibility, Ruth added, was less likely than others since "we have a great need for more building facilities," he said. "Part of the building was originally designed as a dorm, so it could easily revert to that type usage," he added.

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