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Marianas" and calling for "a thorough and comprehensive program of political education concerning its (the MPSC's) negotiations with the United States." According to the newspaper account, after the session Demapan said that "many people have the feeling they're not fully informed" and that "less than 50 percent of the (Saipan) population favors a closer relationship (with the United States)." Nothing more was heard of Demapan's resolution, but a similar one introduced by Councilman Egridino (Dino) Jones was approved with one dissenting vote on October 3. The approved resolution stated that "the people of the Mariana Islands District are not being kept sufficiently informed of the negotiations and their progress" and requested that the MPSC "immediately...institute a comprehensive program of political education concerning its negotiations with the United States and the advantages and disadvantages of the several forms of future political status alternatives which are available to the people of the Mariana Islands District."

On October 4, the closing evening of the session, Councilman Pedro T. Nakatsukasa blasted the ESG task force, charging that it was "certainly not performing its task." Professing ignorance of the meaning of Commonwealth, Free Association and Independence, Nakatsukasa said he had heard many questions concerning the status talks, but that he had not yet heard any answers. He concluded his comments with the hope that the Marianas District and the Headquarters ESG task forces "will soon start to provide the answers that each and every one of us must have."

The reporting officer discussed ESG with David Q. Maratita, Marianas District ESG coordinator, on October 8. Maratita indicated that the District program is limited to the translation and distribution of materials provided by the TTPI Headquarters task force; the one exception to this was the translation into Chamorro and Carolinian of the US/MPSC Joint Communiqué following the fourth round of negotiations in May 1974. Maratita expressed his willingness to translate and disseminate information provided by the MPSC to clarify the special circumstances of the Marianas negotiations, but indicated that he had not received any material from the Commission. In fact, he stated, there had never been any official communication between the District ESG task force and the MPSC on any subject. (The translation and dissemination of the Joint Communiqué was reportedly based on a personal request of the MPSC Chairman, Senator Fangelinan.) Maratita went on to say that his task force believes it would be inappropriate for it to advocate or advance any particular status, such as the Commonwealth relationship now being negotiated between the MPSC and the United States.

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In this vein, he acknowledged having seen a letter from the High Commissioner dated July 3, 1974, in which the views of Mr. Stanley Carpenter, Director of the Department of Interior's Office of Territorial Affairs, on the subject were relayed to the District Administrator. Maratita said the operations of the District ESC task force had not yet been modified as a result of the letter, but that Mr. Carpenter's "recommendations" were under "serious consideration."

Municipal Council Speaker Vicente T. (Ben) Camecho, who is an MPSC member, confirmed on October 10 that the MPSC had not been in communication with the ESC task force and suggested that uncertainty concerning the status negotiations was understandable since there was no effective attempt to explain the situation to the people. He observed that when the MPSC had held hearings in the villages of Saipan prior to Marianas IV, the popular turnout had been very small and few questions were asked. He maintained, however, that those who were interested would find that answers to most of their questions were on record. He added that the Council members who had criticized the political education effort had not even bothered to attend the Commission's hearings or read its reports. He further stated that when he offered to have the MPSC Chairman or Vice-Chairman appear before the Municipal Council, the Council members decided it was unnecessary, as anyone with serious questions for which they were honestly seeking answers could find the answers without using the Council's time. In private conversation with the reporting officer, Councilman Nakatsukasa stated that MPSC member Daniel T. Muna attempted to answer questions raised during the Council session, but that Nakatsukasa had cut him short because he was reading his answers from official MPSC reports -- reports which Nakatsukasa said he had already read which did not answer the questions concerning status to his satisfaction.

Doubts About Commonwealth

Councilmen Dino Jones and Pedro Nakatsukasa each delivered public speeches expressing their uncertainty of the desirability of Commonwealth status for the Marianas (both of which were reported in the Pacific Daily News). On the evening of September 16, Jones commented that status negotiations are going "faster and faster with little or no consideration of what side effects Commonwealth will have on our people." He was particularly concerned with questions relating to alienation of land, job preferences for Micronesians, business permits for non-Micronesians, immigration controls, voting rights in U.S. presidential elections, representation in Congress and the possible authority of the U.S. Congress to unite the Northern Marianas and Guam. Citing articles in the Washington Post and Newsweek, Jones wondered if

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"the Americans want us because we want to become Americans, or do they want our land for their military"?

Nakatsukasa commented on future status in the same speech which contained his remarks on ESC. Asking if "any of us here tonight really knows what that term (Commonwealth) means, and what this new Commonwealth status will involve," he stated "I think that I would like to see us as part of the United States. But I am not sure if I would like this so much if the military could take my land for their bases; if the men and women in the United States Congress who have never been here and do not know our needs and desires could pass laws which affect all of us without our being represented in that body; if the people of the Marianas in an association with other district(s) of Micronesia could have the freedom which we all want; if we are to be economically secure and possessors of a healthy economy; or if, Mr. Speaker, we can (not) get (out) of any future status relationship if we find that we do not like our situation."

Speaking privately on October 10, Nakatsukasa said he had been criticized by the leadership of the Popular Party for his speech, as it conflicted with the party position supporting Commonwealth status. (Popular Party leaders include Senator Edward DLG. Pangelinan, MPSC Chairman, District Legislature President Vicente N. Santos, MPSC Vice-Chairman, and Congressman Herman Q. Guerrero, MPSC member.) Nakatsukasa said he had been clashing increasingly frequently with the party and that he had been told he would not receive party support in the future unless he towed the line--a threat which he said did not concern him as he intended to leave Saipan to attend college in March 1975. (Nakatsukasa is 35 years old.)

Support for Separate Administration

Councilman Nakatsukasa, described by Municipal Council Speaker Ben Camacho as "erratic," was sponsor of the Council's resolution supporting the request of the District Legislature for separate administration of the Marianas. This resolution acknowledged that "the course of the negotiations regarding the future political status of the Mariana Islands District...indicates that the people of the Mariana Islands District are close to agreement upon a new political status which is far different from that proposed or under negotiation for the remainder of the Trust Territory" and expressed the sense of the Council "that a necessary step in the transition from Trusteeship to the new political status which is agreed upon must be the separate administration of the Mariana Islands District in order that the new form of government might

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be implemented while still under the Trusteeship." The resolution passed unanimously on October 2.

Comment

Criticism in the Municipal Council of ESC suggested that the program should better explain to the people of the Marianas "the advantages and disadvantages of the several forms of future political status alternatives," which is exactly the mission which the District task force has set for itself. This is in contrast with the May 14, 1974, instruction from the Office of Territorial Affairs (DOTA) stating the necessity "for ESC programs administered in the Marianas to take fully into account the special political status preferences of that district...." DOTA's letter observed that the "people of the Marianas have been confused by an ESC program with emphasis on territorial unity on the one hand and a separate set of status negotiations on the other." This continues to be as true as on the day it was written, as no effort has been made to develop a program specifically for the Marianas or to coordinate the work of the District ESC task force and the MPSC.

Given the inadequacy of the ESC program and the absence of any other positive effort to reach the people with status-related information, it is understandable that there should be confusion about the specific meaning of Commonwealth as it affects the Marianas. It is true that considerable information is available in MPSC reports, but there is no regular effort to bring this to the public. Those who are interested can seek out the information but this sort of initiative is seldom seen among the people or their elected leaders.

It is something of a paradox that the same individuals who voted for an improved political education program to explain "the alternatives" should also support a resolution for separate administration leading to creation of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. One can only observe that understanding of the negotiations is less than perfect and that positions taken by the Saipan officials could have been better thought out.

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