

SALPAN, MARCH 26 (CONGRESS RELEASE) --- MARIANAS
CONGRESSMEN OSCAR RASA AND JOSE MARINAS CHARGED WEDNESDAY
(MAR. 26); HIGH COMMISSIONER EDWARD E. JOHNSON WITH
"MISFEASING" REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIP BURTON, CHAIRMAN OF
THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS OF
THE U.S. CONGRESS REGARDING HIS INVOLVEMENT ON THE MARIANAS
COVENANT.

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Mar 26

IN A LETTER TO REPRESENTATIVE BURTON, RASA AND MAFNAS CHARGED THAT THE HICOM "MISLED" BURTON BY PROMISING THAT HE OR ANY OF HIS TT SUBORDINATES WOULD NOT "INTERFERE OR INFLUENCE" THE JUNE PLEBISCITE WHEN THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS WILL VOTE TO APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE THE COVENANT.

IN A LETTER TO BURTON DATED MARCH 26, 1975, RASA AND MAFNAS CHARGED THAT THE HICOM HAS DETAILED A U.S. CITIZEN WHO IS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE TT GOVERNMENT AS SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND A MEMBER OF THE TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE RADIO PROGRAMS CALLED "UNDERSTANDING THE COVENANT."

THE CONGRESSMEN ALSO CHARGED THAT THE HICOM'S SUBORDINATE WHO IS ASSIGNED THE TASK OF PRODUCING RADIO PROGRAMS ARRANGED FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE TT GOVERNMENT'S PUBLICATION DIVISION TO "EXPEDITE THE PRINTING OF THE SECOND ISSUE OF THE COVENANT NEWSLETTER, WORK FOR WHICH THEY WERE PAID BY THE TT GOVERNMENT INCLUDING OVERTIME."

THEY ALSO CITED THAT CERTAIN UNNAMED EMPLOYEES OF THE TT GOVERNMENT IN THE MARIANAS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED THE TASK OF TRANSLATING THE COVENANT AND RELATED INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS INTO THE LOCAL LANGUAGE FOR RADIO PROGRAMS. THE PROGRAM "OUR MICRONESIA" PRODUCED BY THE ESG TASK FORCE FOR BROADCAST IN THE TT "HAS BEEN DROPPED WITHOUT EXPLANATION IN THE MARIANAS AND REPLACED BY "UNDERSTANDING THE COVENANT," RASA AND MAFNAS POINTED OUT.

THEY ALSO NOTED THAT THEIR CONCERN IS NOT THAT A POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IS BEING LAUNCHED IN FAVOR OF THE PROPOSED COVENANT, BUT THAT THE WORK IS BEING CARRIED OUT BY 'SUBORDINATES' OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER WITH HIS APPROVAL, AND THAT SUCH WORK CERTAINLY DOES TEND TO 'INFLUENCE' MARIANAS VOTERS." THIS WORK SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT AND FUNDED BY THE MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION WHICH IS NOT THE CASE TODAY, ACCORDING TO RASA AND MAFNAS.

THE MARIANAS CONGRESSMEN ALSO CHARGED THAT THE LOCAL TELEVISION STATION ON SAIPAN (WSZE), "PROVIDED AMPLE TIME IN A QUESTION AND ANSWER INTERVIEW OF AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS TO EXPLAIN THE COVENANT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANAS... BUT IT HAS CURRENTLY ADOPTED THE POLICY OF NOT PROVIDING TIME TO EITHER SIDE TO PRESENT PROS AND CONS RELATIVE TO THIS ISSUE. WHILE THIS STATION IS NOT UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL, FOR SOME REASON ITS MANAGEMENT POLICIES REFLECT A BIAS WHICH MAY BE THE RESULT OF OUTSIDE INFLUENCE."

RASA AND MAFNAS CHARGED THAT THE HIGH COMMISSIONER CONTRADICTED HIS PROMISE EVEN BEFORE IT WAS MADE BEFORE CHAIRMAN BURTON'S COMMITTEE "AND THAT HIS STATEMENTS WERE GROSSLY MISLEADING."

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