

C. Voting "No" Will Not Affect The Present Right To Seek Alternative Political Status - The "No" ballot also says that if Commonwealth is rejected, the Northern Mariana Islands will have the right to participate with the other Districts in determination of an alternative future political status.

That is strange information indeed to be set out in the "No" ballot. Representatives of the Marianas presently participate in negotiations with the Joint Status Committee of the Congress of Micronesia looking toward political status for all of Micronesia. It seems hardly worth noting that the situation will remain unchanged if the vote is "No."

If there is relevance to the point, it presumably is that the result of a "No" vote will be different than "Yes." Is the "No" ballot language actually trying to tell us that if the vote is "Yes", then the people of the Northern Marianas will no longer have the right to participate with other districts in a search for satisfactory political status?

Does that then mean that even if Micronesians in other districts should ultimately decide that they wish to join with the United States and the Northern Mariana Islands in a Commonwealth arrangement, the people of the Northern Marianas will be prevented from participating in any such discussions?

Again, this seems far too much to try to convey in a simple ballot. But if it is in your judgment imperative to include such information in the ballot, the statement should be plainly made in "Yes", not suggested by indirection in the "No" ballot.

This language may be intended to tell the people of the Marianas that, if they vote "No", they will have no right to seek political status other than in participation with the other Trust Territory districts.

That would radically change the plebiscite issue. The issue would not be whether people are for or against the Covenant. It would be whether the people here prefer this Covenant as against some unknown status in union with the rest of Micronesia.

Such an interpretation fits with the implication that a "No" will be considered a vote against Commonwealth in any form, not just as set forth in the Covenant.

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