

10  
6,513

GRASA SAYS PLEBISCITE UNFAIR

JUN 6 1975

SAIPAN, JUNE 6, (CONGRESS RELEASE)--MARIANAS CONGRESSMAN OSCAR CRUZ RASA SAID THURSDAY THERE WILL BE "NO FAIR PLEBISCITE ELECTION" IN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS JUNE 17. BECAUSE IN HIS --OPINION THE OFFICE OF THE MARIANAS PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER, HEADED BY ERWIN CANHAM, IS PRESENTING CANHAM'S "PERSONAL VIEWS AND PERSONAL SPECULATION" TO LOCAL VOTERS INSTEAD OF OBJECTIVE POLITICAL EDUCATION.

CANHAM, APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT FORD TO SUPERVISE THE MARIANAS PLEBISCITE, BEGAN A POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REGARDING THE PROPOSED COMMONWEALTH COVENANT EARLY THIS WEEK-- JUST TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE PLEBISCITE.

HOWEVER, AFTER REVIEWING THE MATERIALS NOW BEING DISTRIBUTED AND HEARD ON LOCAL RADIO AND TELEVISION, RASA SAID THAT THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER'S POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE "DEFINITELY IN FAVOR" OF THE PROPOSED COVENANT. RASA STATED THAT "QUESTION AND ANSWERS" BOOKLETS PRODUCED BY CANHAM "ATTEMPT TO WATER DOWN SENSITIVE ISSUES INSTEAD OF PRESENTING THE ALTERNATIVE FAIRLY TO THE MARIANAS PEOPLE."

"I WANT MY PEOPLE TO HAVE A FAIR PLEBISCITE," RASA SAID. "MY PEOPLE MUST GET A FAIR CHANCE IN A FAIR ELECTION TO SELECT A BETTER COMMONWEALTH THAT BETTER PROTECTS THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF THE MARIANAS PEOPLE."

"CANHAM'S POLITICAL EDUCATION MATERIALS ARE ALL IN FAVORS OF THE COVENANT," RASA CHARGED.

RASA SAID HE BASED HIS CHARGES ON RESPONSES TO CERTAIN WELL-PUBLICIZED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVENANT, SUCH AS "WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COMMONWEALTH?"

"ONLY ADVANTAGES ARE LISTED," SAID RASA.

"NOT ONE DISADVANTAGE WAS GIVEN IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION."

REGARDING OTHER QUESTIONS THAT MENTION "EMINENT DOMAIN" OR CONTROL OF LAND BY THE UNITED STATES, RASA SAID THE CONCEPT OF "EMINENT DOMAIN" AND ITS DANGERS ARE NOWHERE IN THE QUESTION AND ANSWER MATERIALS.

"THE PEOPLE ARE ONLY TOLD THEY CAN GO TO COURT IF THE UNITED STATES WANTS TO TAKE THEIR LANDS," HE SAID. "THE PEOPLE ARE NOT EVEN TOLD THE U.S. FEDERAL COURTS, NOT MARIANAS COURTS, WILL HAVE FINAL AUTHORITY OVER THE DECISIONS MADE BY THE MARIANAS COURTS."

RASA ALSO SAID ANOTHER "VERY IMPORTANT EFFECT" OF THE JUNE 17 PLEBISCITE IS THE PLANNED ISSUANCE OF A SECRETARIAL ORDER IF THE COVENANT IS APPROVED.

"IF 55 PERCENT OF OUR PEOPLE VOTE, 'YES' SAID RASA, "A SECRETARIAL ORDER WILL SEPARATE THE MARIANAS AS EARLY AS JULY, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PLEBISCITE. BUT NOWHERE--LET ME REPEAT: NOWHERE--IS THIS FACT BEING MENTIONED IN THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER'S POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM."

RASA SAID BOTH GROUPS, THE PRO-COVENANT AND ANTI-COVENANT SUPPORTER "DESERVE TO KNOW ABOUT THE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS THAT COULD BE CREATED IF THE MARIANAS IS SEPARATED IN JULY, AND IF THE U.S. CONGRESS REJECTS THE COVENANT AND TELLS THE MARIANAS IT MUST REJOIN THE OTHER DISTRICTS A FEW MONTHS LATER."

QUOTING FROM THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER'S EXPLANATION OF WHAT MAY HAPPEN IF THE U.S. CONGRESS REJECTS THE COVENANT, RASA SAID CANHAM ONLY SAYS: "...THINGS WOULD GO ON AS THEY ARE NOW..."

"THIS IS NOT TRUE. WE WILL BE SEPARATED, AND THEN WE WILL BE TOLD TO REJOIN THE DISTRICTS--EVEN IF IT IS AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE MAJORITY AS EXPRESSED IN THE PLEBISCITE."

03 - 023794

DECLARED.

RASA ALSO STATED THAT CANHAM FLATLY STATES THAT THE UNITED STATES "DOES NOT HAVE ANY PRESENT PLANS TO BUILD A MILITARY BASE ON TINIAN", IN HIS PROGRAMS, ADDING:

"I WONDER IF MR. CANHAM IS AWARE OF STATEMENTS MADE BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS TO THE PEOPLE OF TINIAN TWO YEARS AGO," RASA ASKED. RASA SAID ON JUNE 2, 1973, WILLIAMS TOLD THE TINIAN PEOPLE THAT "AS EARLY AS 1975, PLANNING COULD BEGIN ON THE FIRST PHASE OF A \$144.6 MILLION MILITARY BASE ON TINIAN WHERE 2,600 MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL WOULD BE LOCATED, EXCLUDING DEPENDENTS."

RASA SAID IT IS NOW OBVIOUS THAT THESE PLANS HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY POSTPONED, "BUT WE HAVE AMBASSADOR WILLIAM'S OWN WORDS THAT SUCH PLANS DO EXIST. OBVIOUSLY, SOMEBODY IS LYING," RASA STATED.

CONCERNING THE RECENTLY COMPLETE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS FOR THE PLEBISCITE AND DECISIONS BEING MADE REGARDING WHO MAY VOTE, RASA ACCUSED THE PLEBISCITE COMMISSIONER OF "LOOKING THE OTHER WAY" WHILE CERTAIN VOTERS ARE BEING INTIMIDATED AND "FORCED TO SIGN AFFIDAVITS PLEDGING NOT TO VOTE."

RASA SAID PEOPLE THAT WERE DULY REGISTERED AND MEET ALL RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN "FORCED" TO AGREE IN WRITING NOT TO VOTE BY MEMBERS OF THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION AND DISTRICT LEGISLATURE.

RASA ALSO CHARGED THAT PLACES FOR VOTER REGISTRATION ON THE ISLAND OF ROTA WERE CLOSED "PREMATURELY", AS MUCH AS FOUR OR FIVE HOURS BEFORE THE SCHEDULED CLOSING HOUR. HE ALSO SAID IN PRO-COVENANT AREAS ON ROTA, VOTER REGISTRATION WAS CONDUCTED HOUSE-TO-HOUSE, UNLIKE THE REST OF THE DISTRICT WHERE VOTERS REGISTERED IN VILLAGE MEETING HALLS.

CONCERNING REGISTRATION OF TT CITIZENS WHO ARE NOW "PERMANENT RESIDENTS" ON GUAM, RASA POINTED OUT THAT A TRUST TERRITORY ATTORNEY GENERAL RULED FIVE YEARS AGO THAT SUCH INDIVIDUALS CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN TT ELECTIONS.

RASA SAID APPOINTMENTS TO THE PLEBISCITE REGISTRATION BOARD WERE MADE BY CANHAM, AND THAT TWO-THIRDS OF ITS MEMBERS ARE KNOWN TO BE ACTIVE SUPPORTERS OF COMMONWEALTH.

THE MARIANAS CONGRESSMAN ADDED THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REGISTRATION BOARD BEGAN DISQUALIFYING CERTAIN VOTERS "PREMATURELY" AT THE REGISTRATION PLACES, WHICH RESULTED IN "SCARING PROSPECTIVE VOTERS AWAY," RASA STATED.

RASA ALSO ACCUSED THE MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION, OF WHICH HE IS A MEMBER, OF "TELLING CERTAIN VOTERS NOT TO REGISTER, AND INTIMIDATING PEOPLE FROM OTHER DISTRICTS THAT DID REGISTER."

RASA SAID IN VIEW OF THE RUSHED TIMING OF THE PLEBISCITE, THE LACK OF OBJECTIVE POLITICAL EDUCATION, AND THE REFUSAL BY THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR TO CHANGE THE WORDING OF THE "NO" BALLOT, "THE RESULTS OF THE PLEBISCITE CANNOT POSSIBLY REFLECT THE TRUE ASPIRATIONS OF THE MARIANAS PEOPLE."

RASA SAID "AS LONG AS THE PLEBISCITE IS CONTROLLED BY THE U.S. EXECUTIVE BRANCH, SUPERVISED BY HAND-PICKED APPOINTEES, AND AS LONG AS THE JUDGES WHO DECIDE WHO MAY VOTE ARE APPOINTEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, MY PEOPLE CANNOT HAVE A FAIR AND IMPARTIAL ELECTION."

BT

#0008

023795