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Mr. John B. Oakes, Editor, Editorial Page
New York Times Co.
229 W. 43rd St.
New York, New York 10036

Letter to the Editor

On Sunday, June 29th, you ran an editorial entitled "Planting the Flag", which dealt with the proposed political affiliation of the Northern Mariana Islands with the U.S. Both the tone of the editorial and the repeated misstatements of fact indicate that the writer knew very little of what he was writing about and was operating under what must be a considerable bias against the entire executive arm of government.

The lead paragraph stated that "The United States is poised on the verge of a questionable new economic and military commitment thousands of miles overseas, without as yet even a semblance of serious Congressional consideration." The House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee and other appropriate branches of Congress have been kept informed, hearings have been held and the negotiations, which have been going on for years, have certainly been no secret. Obviously "serious Congressional consideration" (apparently leading to action by both branches) would have been premature until there was something concrete to consider. The recently signed covenant between the U.S. and the Marianas is but a document setting forth conditions which both the Congress and the people of the Marianas were being asked to consider.

In paragraph four, the writer states "The U.S. may already be in defiance of the United Nations in drawing a political separation between the Northern Marianas and the broader Micronesia (sic) Trust Territory...". The charge from the United Nations in the U.S. administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is to prepare the area for eventual self government. Section 1002 of the covenant of agreement provides that the final political separation of the Northern Marianas from the broader Trust Territory will not take place until the entire Trust Territory trusteeship has been terminated.

In paragraph four, "the U.S. singled out the more docile Marianas for special treatment". Anyone familiar with the citizens, political activities and history of Micronesia would smile when they read that

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the people of the Marianas are docile. In fact, the Marianas have been pressing for political affiliation with the U.S. for almost 25 years while other Districts in the Trust Territory have shown a great divergence of views on their future political states.

In paragraph four, "American negotiators agreed to provide some \$140 million in development funds annually for seven years...". The author lost a decimal point somewhere. Section 702 of the covenant provides for annual levels of grant assistance of \$14 million per year for seven years---not \$140 million.

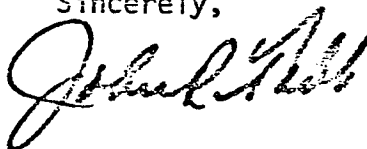
In paragraph four, "announced plans for a lucrative new naval base", is pretty far off base. The covenant and minutes of the negotiating sessions speak of the Defense Department's plans for a multipurpose use of the land on Tinian but the primary activity will be an air base---not a navy base.

In paragraph five "The strategic reasons...may well be vitiated by the increased responsibilities and exposure." The additional exposure when we are fully committed to our territory, Guam, only a couple hundred miles away, would seem slight.

Also in paragraph five, "That is a decision which the Pentagon or the White House cannot be allowed to make on their own." No one who understands the most basic mechanics of our government would ever consider that the executive would, or more importantly could, make this decision on their own. The executive just cannot go around annexing territories around the world independent of Congressional approval and funding. Further I assume that the United Nations may have a position on the issue.

I am afraid that the writer of the editorial didn't do his homework and was operating under some sort of paranoid fear of the executive arm of government. The proposed new Commonwealth, at a minimum, deserves an objective appraisal and it is disturbing to see a newspaper like the TIMES go off so half-cocked.

Sincerely,



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Professor of Economics

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