

10/5

Covenant
hearings

(DELAY URGED ON COVENANT)

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 22 (MNS) ---THE CONSERVATION GROUP "FRIENDS OF THE EARTH" (FOE) IS SEEKING TO DELAY SENATE ACTION ON THE PROPOSED NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH COVENANT AND IS URGING THE INTERIOR COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT HEARINGS IN MICRONESIA FIRST, ACCORDING TO A GANNET NEWS SERVICE REPORT FROM WASHINGTON.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE TENTATIVELY HAS SCHEDULED A HEARING FOR OCTOBER 9 IN WASHINGTON ON THE FOREIGN POLICY ASPECTS OF THE COVENANT. THE COMMITTEE IS ACTING AT THE BEHEST OF SEN. CLAIBORNE PELL OF RHODE ISLAND, ONE OF ITS MEMBERS WHO ACTIVELY OPPOSES THE COVENANT, THE GSN STORY STATED.

THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HAS YET TO DECIDE WHEN IT WILL TAKE A LOOK AT THE AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH SEN. GARY HART OF COLORADO, A MEMBER OF THE PANEL, HAS GOTTEN ASSURANCES FROM CHAIRMAN JOHN C. STENNIS OF MISSISSIPPI, THAT THERE WILL BE SOME KIND OF REVIEW BY HIS COMMITTEE.

THE HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE COVENANT IN JULY.

DAVID BROWER, PRESIDENT OF FOE HAS SENT A LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE URGING THEM TO "SLOW DOWN AND HOLD HEARINGS IN MICRONESIA" BEFORE REACHING A DECISION ON THE AGREEMENT. "MICRONESIANS DESERVE A COMPLETE APPRAISAL OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF ALTERNATE COURSES OF ACTION," BROWER SAID IN HIS LETTER. "DOES ONE WAY OF LIFE HAVE TO DIE SO ANOTHER CAN LIVE?"

ROBERT WENKAM, THE AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER WHO IS FOE'S PACIFIC REPRESENTATIVE, ALSO HAS WRITTEN A LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE URGING MORE TIME FOR "OPPOSING VIEWS" TO BE HEARD FROM OTHER DISTRICTS OF MICRONESIA.

WENKAM, JOINING BROWER AND HART IN AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF FOE'S POSITION LAST WEEK, SAID "THERE IS AMPLE TIME TO HOLD ADDITIONAL HEARINGS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL THE MICRONESIAN PEOPLE TO TESTIFY." NO "OPPOSITION TESTIMONY" FROM MICRONESIA HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN OTHER HEARINGS, WENKAM SAID, "DESPITE THE DESIRE OF MANY MICRONESIANS TO TESTIFY."

WENKAM, AUTHOR OF THE BOOK ABOUT MICRONESIA "BREADFRUIT REVOLUTION" WARNED THAT U.S. COMPANIES MAY BE SEEKING TO USE THE MARIANAS AS A PLACE TO CUT THEIR MANUFACTURING OVERHEAD COSTS. "...EXPLOITING CHEAP LABOR WITHOUT AIR OR WATER POLLUTION

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