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POINT PAPER

Subject: Immigration and Migration matters relevant to the Northern Mariana Islands

1. Each year approximately 400,000 aliens are admitted into the United States as immigrants. This year, the number will be substantially higher because of the 134,000 refugees from Indochina admitted under a special law.
2. The Immigration law does not contain an absolute maximum ceiling on immigration into the United States because there is no numerical limitation on admission of immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. There were 104,844 immediate relatives admitted in the year ending June 30, 1974.
3. There is a numerical limitation of 120,000 immigrant visas to natives of Western Hemisphere countries. They are allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis in the order in which applicants are found qualified for those visas. In fiscal year 1974, there were 115,072 immigrants admitted in this category. The immigration law does not apply to residents of Puerto Rico as they are U.S. citizens. Puerto Rico's population is approximately three million (2,754,000 in 1970). There are no statistics kept on the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States mainland. However, it is obvious that there is significant migration.
4. There is an annual numerical limitation of 170,000 immigrant visas available to aliens from elsewhere throughout the world (the "Eastern Hemisphere" countries and dependencies category). Within this limit, no more than 20,000 visas are available to any one country, and no more than 200 visas to any dependent area of a foreign country. In fiscal year 1974 there were 174,945 aliens admitted under this category. (Note: It appears the limitation was breached by the 9,076 admitted that year as refugees).
5. The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is considered as a foreign country in the eastern hemisphere for immigration purposes. It is not considered as a dependency of a foreign country. Therefore, the numerical limitation of 20,000 is applied to the TTPI.
6. All visas are assigned on a basis of seven preference categories, four of which provide for the reunion of families of U.S. citizens and resident aliens; two for professional, skilled, or unskilled alien workers needed in the United States and one for refugees. Any visas not used by these seven preferences are then available to other immigrants who are not eligible for a preference but who qualified for visas. In cases of aliens admitted for employment, the Department of Labor has to certify that a shortage of workers exists and a specific job is available for the alien. Applicants compete on the basis of their preference

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category with all other applicants for all of the eastern hemispheric countries. Each country is not allocated a "quota" of 20,000. Instead, all applicants in all of the countries of the eastern hemisphere (including the TTPI) having first preference are granted visas, then all applicants having second preference, and so forth. Any country reaching the limitation of 20,000 (as the Philippines and South Korea invariably do) is dropped from the issuance of further visas. When the total limitation for the region of 170,000 is reached, the selection based on preference is ended and only immediate relatives of U.S. citizens can obtain visas for the remainder of that year.

7. These requirements and procedures prevent a Micronesian from obtaining an immigration visa without prior arrangements for a job in the U.S.--unless he is related to a U.S. citizen or possesses a critical skill. For example, a Micronesian cannot obtain an immigration visa to enter the U.S. for the purpose of joining the Armed Forces. He would have to obtain an immigration visa under the normal criteria and then, once in the U.S., join the Armed Forces.

8. From 1960 until 1975 (15 years) there were 1271 U.S. immigration visas issued to residents of the Northern Mariana Islands, one of the districts of the TTPI. Most of these visas were issued for work and residency on Guam. This rate is at an average of 85 per year. The Northern Mariana Islands have a total population at this time of approximately 14,000. There are many family ties between the residents of Guam and the Mariana Islands. Therefore, many Northern Mariana Islands residents are eligible for preference status based on family ties to U.S. citizens. Similarly the economic progress of Guam with its requirement to import approximately 8000 non-immigrant laborers make it relatively easy to obtain a work certificate for a position on Guam. However, a rate of 85 per year for a population of 14,000 does not seem excessive, considering the economic opportunities on Guam and the ease of obtaining an immigration visa.

9. Statistics for the entire TTPI show that 93 immigrant visas were issued in fiscal year 1973 and only 66 visas were issued in fiscal year 1974. It would therefore appear that almost all of the immigration of TTPI citizens into the U.S., occurs from the Northern Mariana Islands.

10. Migration into the Northern Mariana Islands is restricted. For a non-TTPI citizen to obtain an entry permit (required in order to remain in the TTPI for more than 30 days) one must have a purpose. This purpose is usually marriage to a Micronesian or a business venture. Non-TTPI citizens cannot buy land in the TTPI and renting of housing is difficult.

11. From 1970 until 1975 (5 years) there were some 415 TTPI visas (entry permits) issued to U.S. citizens wishing to reside in the Northern Mariana Islands for a rate of 83 per year. These figures exclude TTPI and expatriate (U.S.) contract employees of the TTPI Government. It is noteworthy that the migration flow into and out of the islands is almost exactly identical.

12. Conclusions: Because of the family ties between the people of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Guamanians and because of the economic opportunities on Guam (available jobs and therefore work certificates), it is relatively easy for a resident of the Northern Mariana Islands to obtain an immigration visa. In light of this, the average of 85 per year migration out of the islands, mainly to Guam, would reflect a natural flow which would probably not be radically different after Commonwealth status is obtained by the Northern Mariana Islands. The average of 85 per year migrating into the United States does not appear to be excessive or disproportionate to the total population of the islands. The "Puerto Rican" situation of massive migration from that island to the mainland should not occur in the case of the Northern Mariana Islands.