

The writer is Pacific representative of Friends of the Earth, an international environmental organization. He is author of several books on Micronesia.

By ROBERT WENHAM

On the eve of the nation's 200th anniversary of revolution and freedom from British colonialism, it is strange that we would celebrate our bicentennial by dismembering the embryonic nation of Micronesia to create the first U.S. colony in 50 years — the proposed Northern Marianas Commonwealth.

The U.S. House of Representatives has already voted to accept the new colony in a sham of democratic procedure, a so-called "unanimous" voice vote with no debate and only 27 congressmen on the House floor.

Hawaii's two House members, Patsy Mink and Sparky Matsunaga, both supported the shameful resolution and neither opposed the legislation that would create a major tactical nuclear weapons storage facility and military base in the Marianas islands and, in the process, impose second-class citizenship on the Marianas people.

THE TRUST TERRITORY of the Pacific Islands, called Micronesia, is the last remaining trust territory set up by the United Nations after World War II. All the others have become independent nations.

A deadline has been set for 1981 to grant political self-determination for Micronesia, but while the Micronesian people debate their future, the U.S. offered cash, jobs and food stamps as bait to the Marianas people to join the U.S. They voted overwhelmingly "yes" in a U.N. observed plebiscite offering them the choice of commonwealth now, U.S. style, or nothing.

The Commonwealth resolution is now being considered by the U.S. Senate, which has responded to pleas by Friends of the Earth to "slow down" and has postponed both floor and committee action despite requests by the White House for a Senate vote before the October recess.

U.S. senators have now questioned the need for hasty and premature action and have requested of the Senate leadership that the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees hold hearings in addition to the Interior Committee.

MARIANAS STATUS COMMISSION member, Jose R. Cruz of Tinian, returned from Washington to Saipan this week to report, "U.S. Senate hearings on the Marianas Commonwealth covenant have been indefinitely postponed."

Friends of the Earth has sharply criticized the "unseemly haste" with which the U.S. Congress is considering such an important issue, and is not aware that opposing views have been fully considered, for no opposition testimony from Micronesia has been included in House nor Senate Interior Committee hearing transcripts, despite the desire of many Micronesians to testify.

No hearings have been scheduled for Micronesia where island citizens would be able to testify in person, despite the 1981 effective date that allows ample

commentary.

"Commentary" offers space to readers who want to express thoughtful, reasoned opinions at greater length than provided by the Letters column, generally, 500 to 700 words. Contributions are welcomed, especially those in disagreement with general prevailing viewpoints. All will be considered, but none can be returned. Each should be typed and bear signature, address and occupation of writer.

time for hearings at which all the Micronesian people can have their say in a public forum.

MARIANAS CITIZENS OPPOSED to Commonwealth or who sincerely questioned the procedures being followed, were unable to testify in Washington at House and Senate Interior hearings because of their inability to personally finance the \$1,100 airfare from distant Micronesia to Washington.

Those who did appear to testify in favor were traveling all expenses paid (including several wives plus a month on the town in Washington) at U.S. taxpayers' expense using funds channeled through the Marianas legislature, funds appropriated by the U.S. State Department for "education" after Commonwealth approval.

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