

MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS

November 14, 1975

File - Commonwealth
Senate

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Honorable John Sparkman
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are taking the liberty to respond to a letter dated September 6, 1975 addressed to Senator Gary Hart from certain officers and members of the United Carolinian Association ("UCA") of the Mariana Islands. We are responding to such letter in order to correct the incorrect remarks it contains regarding the Carolinian Community in the Marianas and also to clarify Senator Hart's October 3, 1975 letter to the Senate members regarding the "Carolinian minority in the Marianas".

The entire membership of the UCA in the Marianas consists of only a few persons out of a total of approximately 1,140 voters. No one can accurately state what percentage of our Carolinian Community voted yes or no in the Covenant plebiscite. For that matter, there is no exact figure to precisely indicate the number of yes or no votes among our Chamorro voters simply because the voters are integrated in the various villages of the Mariana Islands.

It is clear that not all Carolinians voted no, nor opposed the Commonwealth status for the Marianas as implied in the letter of the UCA to Senator Hart, and as implied also in Senator Hart's letter of October 3, 1975. Being all from the Island of Saipan, where most of the Carolinians reside, we know where most of the Carolinian voters are concentrated. On the basis of the plebiscite results, submitted into the Hearing record of the House Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs, it is fair to say that out of the approximately 1,140 Carolinian voters, roughly 49% voted in favor of the Commonwealth Covenant. We will not hesitate to state that the UCA is unfairly misrepresenting those 49% of the Carolinian people who voted yes in the plebiscite by including them among the "We the Carolinians" of the UCA letter.

We wish to point out also that the Marianas, which is populated predominantly by Chamorros, is not a part of the western part of the Trust Territory known as the Western Carolines. The opponents of the Marianas Covenant are using pitfalls of geographic terms of Micronesia, i.e., Western and Eastern Carolines, to confuse the real ethnic definition of

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Carolinian and Chamorro and to further advance their argument that the Chamorros of the Marianas are the minority group in Micronesia. For your information, the Palauans, Yapese, and Ponapeans think first of themselves as such and not as "Western or Eastern Carolinians". The Carolinians from the Marianas who have been in the Marianas for over 100 years identify themselves as Marianas people. It is not uncommon to find this sharp distinction even among the young people in Micronesia. It reminded us of a sign painted by a scholarship student from Yap on the door to his room at the University of Guam dormitory: "Micronesia is a concept but Yap is a reality".

Looking at geography alone, it is possible to make the error that there is a true ethnic majority in Micronesia. This of course is not the case. The small number of Carolinians in the Marianas who oppose the Marianas Covenant are appealing to the misinformed outsiders that they are in fact the majority group in Micronesia by virtue of a geographic misnomer. The ancestors of the Carolinians of the Marianas migrated to the Mariana Islands over 100 years ago. Any real affinity, other than common ethnic background with some islanders of the Western and Eastern Carolines, is hypothetical and at best artificial. The fact that the argument as to what constitutes a majority in the Marianas has been advanced by some Carolinians of the Marianas opposing the Covenant is simply to further confuse the issue of self-determination for the Marianas people, Chamorro and Carolinians alike.

Finally, we wish to comment on the statement of the UCA to Senator Hart, "We strongly feel that a decision of this nature (Commonwealth status for the Marianas) must initially come from our leaders in the Congress of Micronesia". On November 5, 1975 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the representatives of the Congress of Micronesia ("COM") stated in writing and in oral response to questions that the COM supported the Senate approval of the Marianas Covenant. Accordingly, there should be no doubt now regarding the COM's endorsement of the Marianas Covenant. Senator Hart's previously expressed contention that the Congress of Micronesia is strongly opposed to the Marianas separate status is also outdated.

Mr. Chairman, academic argument can be very healthy and informative, but at the same time, it can present very misleading and biased information. We hope that our letter to you would serve to clarify some of the most serious problems of misinterpretation that may have been made as a result of the letters sent to you for insertion into your Committee's record from opponents of the Marianas desire for self-government.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Very truly yours,

Daniel T. Muna, Member
Mariana Islands District
Legislature

Pedro A. Tenorio, Senator,
from the Mariana Islands,
Congress of Micronesia

Manuel A. Sablan, Member
Marianas Political Status
Commission

cc: Senator Gary Hart
United Carolinian Association, Saipan

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