

MARIANAS POLITICAL STATUS COMMISSION  
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS

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November 19, 1975

The Chairman and Members of the  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Gentlemen:

We are writing again on behalf of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to urge your support for the prompt approval of the Marianas Covenant. We do not believe that any of the reasons advanced for the delay of congressional approval of the Covenant justify postponing action on this important matter. In this connection, we urge that you reread the letter dated November 12, 1975, to you from our counsel.

We understand that the primary argument advanced in support of delay is that Congress should not act on the Covenant until the other five districts of Micronesia determine the kind of political status they want. No one now knows how long that will take; it may take many years. During the interim, the people of the Marianas will, contrary to the principles of the Trusteeship Agreement, be denied the right of local self-government that will be theirs under the Covenant. Furthermore, the people of the Marianas will be put in the untenable position of being part of a political entity to which they do not wish to belong, and in which they are no longer welcome. Thus delay imposes serious adverse consequences on

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the people of the Marianas.

Moreover, delay cannot possibly serve any useful purpose for the Senate. The unalterable political reality of Micronesia is that the Marianas people desire commonwealth status under the Covenant, with the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship, while the people of the rest of Micronesia want independence with some greater or lesser relationship with the United States under an agreement that would be unilaterally terminable by either side. No one has pointed to a single relevant piece of information that will be available if the Covenant is delayed that is not presently available. The conceptual nicety of dealing with all of Micronesia in one fell swoop has no practical importance.

Finally, delay may well have an adverse effect on United States foreign policy objectives. First, delay threatens the indefinite extension of the Trusteeship Agreement, because delay will inevitably be seen in the Marianas as raising the question whether the Covenant will ever be approved. The people of the Marianas overwhelmingly want commonwealth status; if this is denied to them there is no assurance that an acceptable alternative can be found. Indefinite continuation of the Trusteeship under these circumstances would violate the Trusteeship Agreement and would subject the United States to continuing valid criticism around the world. Second, the national security interests of the United States can be protected

only by approval of the Covenant, because only the Covenant provides a permanent guarantee that the Marianas will be willing to assist the United States in carrying out its defense policies.

We close by responding to two less significant arguments advanced by advocates of delay. One is that Congress should review the proposed Micronesian constitution. We understand that this document has already been submitted to the Committee, so presumably this argument no longer is being advanced. The Committee's review of the proposed Micronesian constitution will confirm that important political differences exist between the Marianas and the other districts of Micronesia. The proposed Micronesian constitution contains a broad exception from its bill of rights that would sanction incursions into individual liberties to protect Micronesian tradition, including the customary rights of traditional non-elected leaders. The proposed Micronesian constitution calls for a form of government that does not contain three separate and independent branches. The people of the Marianas cannot accept provisions like these.

A second argument that has been advanced for delay is that certain of the mechanical aspects of separation of the Marianas from the remainder of Micronesia have not been settled to the satisfaction of the Congress of Micronesia. That argument should have been laid to rest entirely by the joint letter from representatives of the Congress of Micronesia and the Marianas

to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 13, in which both parties indicated that delay of Congressional action on the Covenant was unwarranted on this ground. Counsel for both parties are in the process of preparing a formal document incorporating our basic agreements on all issues but one.

We respectfully submit that proponents of delay have proposed no defensible reason for inaction. The unavoidable conclusion is that delay is being proposed by those who are opposed to commonwealth status for the Marianas. The underlying position of these persons is that the peoples of Micronesia -- both those of the Marianas and those of the other five districts -- should be forced into a common political status whether they like it or not. We do not believe that the Senate can or should deny the fundamental right of self-determination to the people of the Marianas in this way.

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