

## Inside Micronesia:

# "Only 90,000 People,

# Who gives a Damn?"

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Loren Eiseley, writing in the first volume of the Earth's Wild Places series, *Galapagos: The Flow of Wildness*, said a decade ago, "Voyages without islands to touch upon would be epics of monotony." Kenneth Brower, who edited that first volume, is now the author of the tenth, *Micronesia: Island Wilderness*. He takes us on a voyage that touches upon two thousand two hundred islands, beautiful and little known, as are its people and their culture. All are in peril and need not be.

When Kenneth Brower touches upon islands, he does so with unique blending of the immediate and vicarious. For ten years, with increasing skill, he has been describing what is important in the earth's wild places, not so much through what he has seen directly, but through what he has perceived others to have seen. He has a delightful knack of looking through their eyes, of sensing their reaction, of understanding the impact of environment upon the people it grew—then putting it into words that evoke in the reader the clearest of images of people and place, and their meaning.

It started when he saw the Galapagos Islands through the adolescent eyes of Fiddi Angermeyer. It continued through the eyes of many others in the Hawaiian Islands, in the Brooks Range, in his earlier work in Micronesia, as well as still other eyes in the Galapagos, including, in a way, a tortoise's eyes:

Once he gets big a tortoise has no enemies, and if he avoids falling over a pit or into a lava pit too steep for escape, he dies only of old age. One day he gets too weak to move, and stops. He stays in that spot for months, sometimes, his long-practiced power of enduring, his racial skill at it, serving him long after his power to move and get food has failed. Watching leaves fall, probably, and the season change... the tortoise living only in its head and eyes, a spark still somewhere inside, above the plastron and below the dome.

In the present volume, after the points of view Kenneth Brower saw have come through, you know that Micronesia and its people are too important to be pushed into the sump so many places have gone as first the missionaries, then the traders, and finally the bankers and the military have converted their targets to cash, and to mediocrity.

Robert Wenkam, perhaps the outstanding photographer of the Pacific Basin, has provided far more than sixty-four



pages of enthralling color. He has brought to bear his wide knowledge of the region in which he serves Friends of the Earth as Pacific Representative. Moreover, in his introduction, he presents an imaginative and timely new idea for concurrent preservation of culture and of unique land- and seascape. The oceanic park system he envisages would embrace key parts of Nan Madol, Eleboab, Peleliu, Arno Atoll, Marpi, Truk Lagoon, and Guam. And the culture that originated there and can continue there, if given a chance, long after the overdeveloped world has overexpended its heritage and lost contact through overmechanization.

For reasons Raymond Dasmann makes clear in his pref-

atory remarks, the word 'park' has lost some of its luster lately, and the need for preservation has been submerged in a sea of immediately pressing resource problems. Robert Wenkam and Kenneth Brower initiate a renaissance of interest in the park idea, expanded to encompass people who have learned to be compatible with the earth, to replenish themselves without subduing it.

What these men advocate, what FOE advocates, is quite consonant with the World Heritage, the recent United Nations convention now awaiting further signators. This is the world's principal hope in assuring that the beautiful and the unique, in organic wholeness and in the people who have not tried to live apart from it, will not be homogenized in our global flurry of industrial development. Places like these ought never vanish from the earth. —D.R.B.

#### What You Can Do

1. Join the Friends of the Earth Task Force that is working to see that the World Heritage comes to pass.
2. Support the effort of the United Nations Environment Programme and of the International Union for Conservation to the same end.
3. Follow the progress of the World Heritage in *Not Man Apart*, FOE's semimonthly publication.
4. Be prepared to exert your own influence often, with respect to Micronesia, in support of Micronesians who are trying to resist the East-West pincers threatening them with loss of their heritage for a kind of colonial gain that might once have served a purpose, but is now obsolete.
5. Become acquainted with other volumes in *The Earth's Wild Places*, too.



Photos by Robert Wenkam

## Parks, Tourism and the Chiefs of Maap by Robert Wenkam

**W**e hope the Micronesian people will see merit in the oceanic park concept. It is controversial in Micronesia, and arguments against the parks heard in many scattered islands have a familiar sound: it is a "take-over" of land, an abridgement of "home rule," and hunting and fishing will not be allowed—the words of opposition voiced by the same kind of politician, speculating land owner, and growth-is-good businessman as have opposed almost every national park anywhere.

Micronesians have their own share of native developers and exploiters who would carve up the fragile islands for personal profit or for "jobs for young people," without concern for long-range adverse consequences. The exploitation influence is strongly felt in district legislatures and the Congress of Micronesia. The greater danger to the fragile islands, however, is from outside—from multinational corporations of every kind. Perez Olindo, director of national parks in Kenya, has condensed colonial history to the minimum: "First the missionaries, then the traders, and now the bankers." Somewhere in the sequence he might have added the military, protectors of the three.

A unique island style with amenities of great value to all civilized people can easily disappear in the trappings of economic development before even the Micronesians are able fully to appreciate what they are losing. It is a recurrent pattern, again and again, around the world: not missing the

water 'til the well goes dry, a resistance to learning from mistakes others have already made. Until so-called "civilized" nations imposed their beneficial rule on Micronesia, there were no environmental problems in the islands.

Micronesians sincerely concerned about their ecological and cultural future can easily suspect a government that wants to take away entire islands for parks and military bases. They would like to be a part of the action, perhaps even determine for themselves whether any land-use decisions under consideration are really for their own good. They want to learn by doing. As Marshallese Irojii Amata Kabua says, "We'll never learn anything unless we have the opportunity to trip and fall."

### A Pattern Against Independence

But the United States appears determined to prevent the Micronesians from acquiring skills for independence. Over the years a definite pattern has developed to insure Micronesian and Guamanian economic dependence on the US and to confuse and divide the people on every question of importance to their future.

To destroy opposition to military plans for an ammunition loading pier on Guam, the US Navy was capable of infiltrating Guam's environmental groups, splitting their votes and rendering them ineffective.

When Friends of the Earth organized widespread political support for a Micronesian-created park system, the US Trust Territory administration imported US national park staffers



from Honolulu to produce a "federal" inventory of scenic and historical sites. Over the opposition of FOE's Pacific Representative, the US High Commissioner of the Trust Territory caused a bill to be introduced in the Congress of Micronesia calling for acquisition of a Trust Territory "national" park system, well knowing that islanders were opposed to government take over of land. The bill died swiftly. As if to insure permanent defeat of a Micronesian park by and for Micronesians, as proposed by FOE, The US Department of Interior, working again through the Trusteeship administration, unilaterally included six sites within the lands of Micronesia for designation in the United States National Register of Historic Places. The 100,000 American dollars that went along with the declaration were welcomed, but the effrontery of including Micronesian lands as US historical sites could not be overlooked by Micronesians struggling for national identity.

Thus, advocacy of land acquisition and management to create an islandwide park system was confused with widespread demands by the US Department of Defense for military bases, both proposals seemingly taking away from the people their best lands, "for your own good."

Some observers feel that Micronesia cannot afford the luxury of making their own decisions in their own time, of learning by doing in the American tradition. FOE's experience in personal exchanges throughout the islands points to a different conclusion; it reveals keen native understanding of island ecology and nature that only awaits the opportunity for renewal through revitalization of island culture and skills, and the full appreciation of pride and individual accomplishment and security involved in a village-oriented agricultural economy. Creation of an innovative park system that recognizes the value of the land and the desirability of living on the land could offer Micronesian people what they have been systematically denied through generations of colonialism—the best of both worlds: the opportunity to limit economic development and tourism so as to assure no more than enough benefit to Micronesians from that source, and

concurrently to enjoy the bounty of their unique island life-style.

### Simple Justice and Freedom

The islanders plead not only for simple justice, freedom, and a fair share of the rewards, but also for a world in which their finite resources will continue to benefit those who choose to sail and hunt and farm and live the old way. Let others work for day after daily wage to buy fiberglass boats and outboard engines to power them. For after the timber, minerals, and oil are gone from everywhere else on earth, the Micronesians who have remembered the old ways, who have used only what they need, respecting the land and living with it—these people will still enjoy a bountiful way of life.

FOE's suggestions for a Micronesian park are therefore not just a conventional system of land management for island wilderness or some new kind of zoo for primitive island peoples. The Micronesians are as integral a part of the park system as they are of their own island ecosystem. The oceanic park idea is not only a program to preserve the interdependent relationship between land, sea, and sky, but a way to also help protect the islands from technological and political erosion of the Micronesian cultural heritage of two thousand years. It is an idea in praise of island civilization and way of living that can serve as an example for all of the earth's people.

To a significant extent, Micronesians already treat their islands as parks—without calling them parks—because it is in their own best interests. The attitude of the Yapese people on Maap island is a classic case of native opposition to development for the sake of the economy instead of for the sake of society.

### NBK's Facade on Maap

When Japan's multi-national Nanyo Noeki Kaisha (NBK) corporation began construction of extensive resort facilities

*"We have inherited from our fathers a land that is lovely and provides for us the fruits of the earth and of the sea. We are few in numbers but have a brave history and are strong in our resolve to preserve these things that are sweet to us..."*

*From a resolution of the Chiefs of the Island of Maap.*

on Maap, they anticipated local opposition and hid their scheme behind the facade of a firm called Yap Nature Life Garden Incorporated. They began activities on a small scale, without constructing permanent buildings. First guests from Japan stayed in tents and ate from a temporary kitchen and dining area. This was but the first increment of a future resort planned eventually to consist of 47 air-conditioned concrete block cottages, a 500-foot-long pier extending to the barrier reef around Maap, and an enclosed deep-water swimming area dredged from the inner shoal waters, where coral heads and seaweed would be removed. The people of Maap were told there would be a general improvement and clean-up of the entire island.

As it turned out, the improvements were not exactly what the residents expected and the visitors from Japan turned out to be tourists not unlike their American counterparts, who had stirred up considerable trouble on nearby Rumung Island pursuing bare-breasted girls to photograph them.

The first complaint came from an adjacent village, where Japanese tourists were said to be stealing coconuts. Then the women objected to Japanese girls swimming in bikinis. Proper Yapese may be bare-breasted, but long grass skirts must cover their ankles. The bikinis were obviously disgraceful! Tourists were also wandering uninvited into homes, and fishermen discovered their lines to throw-nets hung in trees to dry had been snapped. The situation rapidly became intolerable, and the people began demanding that NBK go home. Within the month, more than seventy percent of the adult villages of Maap island had signed a petition. It had been dictated by their chiefs and translated into English by attorneys financed by the US Office of Economic Opportunity in Colonia, the Yap district center. When the US High Commissioner learned what the attorneys were doing, he ordered their funds withdrawn, saying that they were not properly representing the people.

The petition of the Maap residents is an unusual plea addressed to whoever could help them, anywhere, "to legal, governmental or other authorities or persons... within and beyond the district of Yap... and to all who love justice."

The enraged people and their hereditary chiefs expressed their feeling precisely:

"Whereas we love our land and the ways in which we live together there in peace, and yet live humbly and still cherish them above all other ways, and are not discontent to be the children of our fathers, it has become apparent to us that we have been persuaded to subscribe to processes that will quickly extinguish all that we hold most dear."

In reference to the Japanese tourist development company, the chiefs claimed the firm had taken advantage of their "goodwill and inexperience," and "By usurping unnegotiated lands, assuming nearly dictatorial manners in the area where it operates, obscuring the nature and the extent of its ambitions and the inevitable and irreversible injury that these will cause to our customs and our pride, the company has far exceeded all pretence to legality and welcome to our land. It plans to make a dead sea of our lagoon, and thus a dead place of its shores."



*Maap  
Resurvey's  
phase*



*"We love our land and the ways in which we live together there in peace, and yet live humbly and still cherish them above all other ways, and are not discontent to be the children of our fathers. . . We do not [want to] become servants in our own land. . ."*

*From a petition signed by the people of Maap Island*

The petition continued, "We, men and women of Maap of majority age, now urgently and passionately unite to repudiate and refuse all association with that company and to ask the help of the people, customary leaders and District officers of Yap and legal, governmental and international bodies within and beyond the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in ridding us of this invasion and freeing us, that we do not become servants in our own land, to choose for ourselves the paths that will be good for the people of all the villages of Maap."

### **The Maap Chiefs Reply**

The Chiefs of the Island of Maap met in full assembly and adopted a resolution that might be interpreted as a declaration of independence from outside interference. Their resolution began, "We, pilungs and langanpagels, elders and elected officers, Chiefs in Council of and on behalf of all the people of the Eighteen Villages and Fiefs of the Island of Maap . . . declare our love of this place and of the ways passed down to us by the generations. We have inherited from our fathers a land that is lovely and provides for us the fruits of the earth and of the sea. We are few in numbers but have a brace history and are strong in our resolve to preserve these things that are sweet to us and freely to determine the affairs of our island with respect to custom and deference to the law . . ."

"Henceforth, any proposal, from whomsoever it may come, be it even one of us, that threatens by change or innovation to infringe upon the integrity of our well-loved ways or of the land and the waters about us that have so long sustained them, should be first submitted . . . for review and evaluation . . ." The resolution points out "that we meet today under the shadow of such change and innovation and that we know our people to be roused against these things, as they today do forcefully convey through a petition. That we are therefore all the more solemnly moved to affirm our united will in the face of the unfamiliar contingencies of this age and the ages to come, so that our home may not be vulnerable to the casual invasions of those who do not know our hearts or the disloyal speculations of those who do."

NBK's building blocks and cement were already warehoused and other constructions were enroute by ship to finish the buildings that were said to be forty percent completed. But NBK was forced to leave, and with their departure Yap Nature Life Garden collapsed. The appointed Chairman of the Yap Tourist Commission later told me the Maap people were not actually opposed to tourists; they simply, wanted to know what was going on and didn't like strangers poking into their houses."

It was a reasonable objection.

I later visited the abandoned hotel site with permission of the village magistrate. The Yapese children were again playing on their beach, once usurped by alien tourists monopolizing the warm sands. As I sailed closer across the shallow lagoon waters they dashed away into the protective shadow of the coconut palms and disappeared from sight. My Yapese guide said we should leave. I was a tourist. It was easy to see I was not wanted. ■

## Oil Fever Strikes Palau

by Ron Ronck

The archipelago of Palau, lying 550 miles east of the Philippines in the Western Carolines, contains one of the world's most beautiful tropical environments.

But for how much longer?

A friend of mine was stranded there, on Palau's Kayangel Atoll, during Typhoon Mary in late 1974. She wanted to leave but the island's chief, Redechor, would not let her sail until his magician calmed the fierce winds.

That night, Bandari Behab, a local fisherman who carries the inherited title of Abelbai, walked around the island and performed a ritual taught to the first of his ancestors by a demon. When morning came, the seas around Keyangel were nearly as flat as glass. Then he explained:

Many years ago, a man was out collecting syrup from his coconut trees when he saw a giant sea snake. The snake asked for a drink of coconut milk and the man gave it to him. Soon they became good friends and the snake taught the original Abelbai all the secrets of the wind that could save Kayangel from bad weather.

Behab, now 65, has already begun instructing a successor in his magic.

"I will teach him almost everything," he explained to my friend, "reserving only certain secrets until the last minute since I will die within several days of the last telling. Those secrets I will tell him on my deathbed.

"When I die, no one can cry for me, not even my family—everyone on the island must be quiet. And my casket cannot be carried on the shoulders of men but must be dragged through the streets with ropes. If the wind sees that I'm dead, he might send a tidal wave to cover the island."

Although Behab remains healthy and alert, always on the lookout for bad weather, he does not have the power to calm the latest storm to strike his small atoll. For these ill winds carry the blinding sickness known as oil fever.

Though it is relatively unknown to most Americans, some have learned of Palau through Ken Brower's book, *With Their Islands Around Them* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974). More exposure will come shortly. Brower once again teams up with photographer Robert Wenkam to bring us (FOE's own long-awaited book, *Micronesia: Island Wilderness*.

Who owns Palau, a reader might ask? I'd say Palauans like Bandari Behab, of course, but in fact (this may be a revelation to some) it is part of the US Trust Territory, a political entity ruled by this country under a United Nations agreement created after World War II. The US was asked to govern these islands until the native people became capable of governing themselves.

On June 18, 1975, the people of the Northern Marianas in the Trust Territory, voted overwhelmingly to become the next US commonwealth—a decision up to Congress to approve—but leaders in Palau still haven't made up their minds about a future political status. Some favor complete independence, but until they find a proper economic base to support their dreams, they have no other choice but to remain colonized.

Ken Brower's narrative of conservation efforts in Palau ended three years ago. Much has happened since then. The biggest news of all, though, is that the biggest environmental enemies of yesterday have been replaced by the threat of oil depots and supertankers.

A group of Japanese potential investors, led by the Industrial Bank of Japan, Nissho-Iwai and Teijin, have proposed that Palau become the "primary oil transshipment port of the Western Pacific." Large supertankers en route from the Persian Gulf would unload their oil here to be stored

and eventually transferred to smaller ships bound for Japan and elsewhere. They officially refer to this station as "Port Pacific at Palau."

Last year, this group—with the support of oil interests in Iran—commissioned Robert Panero Associates in New York to prepare a conceptual study on the project. An "Interim Report" was released to selected individuals on April 1 and a copy found its way to me.

According to the controversial report, the area proposed for Port Pacific lies at the northern end of Palau, between the largest island of Babelthup and the fragile atoll of Kayangle. The latter would house refinery workers. The report says the target area is "almost completely enclosed by two-to-six-kilometer-wide reefs, which are uncovered at low tide and accessible by five deep-water passages to the open sea." These outer reefs enclose lagoons of approximately 500 square kilometers.

Port Pacific's land area, to the south, "consists of approximately 50 square kilometers of land, on which there are four small villages containing less than 1,500 individuals in total."

There are indeed "only" 1,500 people living there, but the report fails to speculate on how they would feel if their centuries-old homeland was suddenly "adapted." This is the word that planner Panero uses to describe what can happen to these unspoiled reefs if the proposal becomes reality. "The natural harbors of the Port Pacific," Panero states, "can be adapted to almost any special consideration. Entrances can be deepened and widened, or closed to increase protected qualities. Reefs and shoals can be used for direct construction of facilities on piles, filled to provide secure, above-water platforms, and/or diked and enclosed to provide below-water level, protected sites for a full range of energy and industrial facilities..."

"In physical terms," he continues, "the natural harbor zones of the Port Pacific area can be considered a 'superport' with few limited factors. Enclosed protected deep water zones are larger than any currently under consideration by the US or Europe, and significantly larger than the current large harbors of the world."

Both Japan—it imported 250 million tons of oil in 1974—and Iran consider Palau the ideal site for such a superport. This is at least partly because the Malacca Strait route from the Persian Gulf to the Western Pacific will not be able to handle the 1,000,000 DWT supertankers now on the drawing boards. They will have to go around Sumatra and through the deeper and wider Lombok Strait, the Makassar Strait east of Borneo, and the Celebes Sea south of the Philippines; and building an intermediate transfer station at Palau will make it unnecessary for the Japanese to develop deep-water receiving ports in their own country.

Indeed, the report states, moving the messy business to Palau "provides an advantageous avenue for overcoming the many problems associated with their present over-crowded, over-polluted, and undesirable port and refinery situation." They obviously think it's time to dump their garbage into somebody else's back yards.

Though a few Palauan businessmen may feel such pollution is worth the dollars that will flow into their bank accounts, islanders who live close to the land have opposing views. Dr. Robert Johannes, a reef ecologist now studying native marine lore, has talked at length with fishermen in northern Palau about the superport issue.

"To bring oil to our reefs would be like dropping bombs on them," Chief Salvadore of Ngerchelung municipality told him after hearing the details of the proposal. Chief Redechor of Kayangle expressed the same thoughts: "It is unacceptable to us. If it is allowed to be built over our wishes, we will



carry our protests all the way to the US Supreme Court if necessary."

Despite such fighting words, it is unclear who will have the final say in determining the fate of these reefs. Traditional Palauan custom gives these two chiefs ownership of all the waters within the Port Pacific area, but the US Trust Territory Government now claims final jurisdiction. It will not openly go against the wishes of the Palauans, but it does have the ability to influence and manipulate opinion.

High Commissioner Edward E. Johnson has said that the islanders alone will decide on the matter, but he is fully aware that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has unofficially endorsed the project in his talks with the Shah of Iran. One remembers Kissinger saying of Micronesia: "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?"

Such a superport in Palau, Kissinger believes, would go far in reducing our vulnerability to unanticipated oil shortages. Instead of openly urging the use of alternative sources of energy, he is playing his cards with the Shah, hoping to win a hand that will guarantee the US a supply of oil until the Middle East runs dry.

And a superport isn't all Panero has in store for Palau: "This project is economically attractive by itself," the proposal states, "but it will have the added advantage of setting the stage for a series of further expansions and extensions of Babelthuap Island in order to accommodate storage tanks, transfer facilities, large-scale refineries, and eventually petrochemical plants. In addition, large flat-reef platforms are available as sites for new facilities."

Panero goes on to say that "because the Palau islands can reasonably be expected to be under the protection of the US Navy for at least a generation, investment of very large sums to achieve the foregoing objectives can be justified."

Such is the way of thinking that might eventually blacken one of the most splendid island groups on earth. The publication of *Micronesia: Island Wilderness* couldn't come at a better time. Americans must be shown why there should never be a Port Pacific at Palau. If Micronesia is to be served, we must begin now.

Ron Ronck, a reporter for the *Pacific Daily News* on Guam, is Friends of the Earth's Guam Representative.

The mid-June plebiscite in the Marianas, the northern and western-most chain of Micronesia's islands was the subject of comment by Senator Gary Hart (D-Colo.), *The Nation*, and *The New York Times*.

The plebiscite also drew critical remarks from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which is publishing a study on Micronesia this fall. James F. McHenry of Carnegie's humanitarian policy studies program called the vote a "betrayal" in a news story that was nationally circulated on July 30.

The US government's agreement to acquire the Marianas, which the House approved and is up for consideration by the Senate, is, Mr. McHenry said, "contrary to international law and international practice." He suggested that the United

Nations—under whose auspices the US has administered the Micronesia Trust Territory—might reject the move.

Mr. McHenry is the principal draftsman of the 439-page study. It concludes that US moves to acquire the islands are based on "exaggerated" views of their military value and little if any concern for their people.

"The House of Representatives felt it could deal adequately with the question of the first acquisition of Territory in 75 years—could consider an agreement which grew out of six years of negotiations—in a little more than a month," He said, and joined the *Times* and Senator Hart in urging more caution in the Senate. Mr. McHenry suggested that an agreement with all of Micronesia based on loose "free association" with the US might be a better arrangement.

## Planting the Flag

The United States is poised on the verge of a questionable new economic and military commitment thousands of miles overseas, without as yet even a semblance of serious Congressional consideration.

By executive branch decision and planning, the Mariana Island chain of the western Pacific has been offered commonwealth status under the formal sovereignty of the United States. If carried through, this would become the first territorial annexation by the country since 1925.

Even if such a historic transaction were straightforward and without controversy, it would have seemed proper for the Congress to be consulted and involved from the early planning stages. As it happens, the proposed annexation of the Marianas is far from straightforward and it is surrounded by controversy.

The United States may already be in defiance of the United Nations in drawing a political separation between the Northern Marianas and the broader Micronesia Trust Territory, which the U.N. assigned as a single unit to United States administration in 1948. As local authorities across Micronesia began to agitate for eventual independence, the United States singled out the more docile Marianas for special treatment. American negotiators agreed to provide some \$140 million in development funds annually for seven years, announced plans for a lucrative new naval base and presented the islands' 15,000 residents with a take-it-or-leave-it choice. A plebiscite this month produced the expected result, a vote of nearly 80 percent in favor of commonwealth status and the prospect of becoming United States citizens.

The strategic reasons for extending United States sovereignty deep into the Pacific 3,300 miles west of Hawaii and alongside the established base at Guam, may have merit—but this may well be vitiated by the increased responsibilities and exposure. That is a decision which the Pentagon or the White House cannot be allowed to make on their own.

When all the relevant decisions are finally submitted to Congress, as President Ford said they will be soon, legislators need feel no obligation to give the rubber-stamp approval that is apparently expected of them. Here is one opportunity for the Congress to consider carefully a possible new American commitment in all its implications—political, economic and military—before discovering a *fait accompli*.

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## Destiny Unmanifest

With a haste that is both unnecessary and ominous, the Congress is moving toward rubber-stamp approval of a far-reaching strategic commitment that Americans may come to regret. This is the covenant granting commonwealth status—hence United States citizenship and sovereignty—for the northern Mariana island chain in the western Pacific.

After perfunctory moments of debate with fewer than 25 members of the floor, the House of Representatives gave its approval by voice vote last week to this country's first territorial annexation since 1925. The Administration is seeking equally rapid and unquestioning action by the Senate.

There are countless questions about this whole issue which have yet to be considered by more than a handful of the Congress, involving this country's relations with the United Nations and with the other peoples of the Pacific Trust Territory, not to mention the entire defense and strategic posture of the United States in the Pacific.

"Commonwealth" is a vague juridical term, but under the covenant approved by a vast majority of the Marianas population in a plebiscite last month, the islands would receive financial and legal privileges even more generous in some ways than those accorded the other American commonwealth, Puerto Rico. The strangest feature in the present discussion—or lack thereof—is the ease with which a political change of this magnitude is contemplated; many legislators seem to regard it as the most natural development in the world for the United States simply to extend citizenship and sovereignty to another people who have asked for it.

It seems to us that the burden of proof falls upon advocates of annexation to justify why the United States should extend its responsibilities in this way. What are the specific and worthwhile benefits which the United States would receive from this new association? Perhaps eventually a convincing case will be made. A series of legal steps lies ahead before the change can be effected, including far from automatic approval by the United Nations, which assigned Pacific trust obligations to the United States in 1947.

But this is the first and last formal occasion for Congress to express its will on joining the Marianas to the United States. If the Senate allows itself to be steamrolled into a little-understood proposition now, it will be on weak ground to complain once the problems arise.

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### New in the Earth's Wild Places Series

**Micronesia: Island Wilderness**

By Kenneth Brower

Photographs and Introduction by Robert Wenkam

Prefatory statements by David R. Brower  
and Raymond F. Dasmann

To Walter Hickel's plea for Micronesians, Henry Kissinger replied: "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?"

There are now 110,000 people, living on 90 of the 2,203 islands of Micronesia, who give a damn. Their total area is less than that of Rhode Island, scattered over a vast three million square miles of Pacific. Some islands can sustain only a single family, or an occasional copra-harvesting party. The rest of the islands are wilderness. With few exceptions, even the inhabited islands are wild, for the traditional life is not the kind that makes land tame.

Kenneth Brower writes: "It has been decided, apparently...that the success of millenia is of no account and the island cultures that passed on, through

all those successive generations, the living reefs and their various and variegated fishes, and the green fecund jungles, and the flawless beaches painfully white in the sun, must now give way to a civilization that can't pass a thing on intact, and has never learned to live harmoniously with anything."

To give a feeling for the place, for its people, and for the kind of help they need and don't need, Robert Wenkam and Kenneth Brower have collaborated for the third time and have done so magnificently.

Micronesians cannot defend themselves against the great powers who now seek to make the islands of Micronesia something else and something less. It is the powers themselves who must learn what the unique island beauty means to the eye and ear, and to the conscience.

This book tries to give them that chance.

160 pages, 64 in color, 10¼ x 13½ inches, \$29.50.  
(Until October 1, \$22.00.)

This pamphlet is illustrated with photographs by Robert Wenkam, from *Micronesia: Island Wilderness*. In the book, the pictures appear in full color lithography, varnished.