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16, 25

7-71MFO 1/76

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T 932703 EIA242 PAGE 01 NC 91283

TOR: 200452Z MAY 76

R 191045Z MAY 76
 FM HICOMTERPACIS SAIPAN MARIANAS ISLANDS
 TO RUEHC /ORCSTATE WASHINGTON DC
 INFO RUHNSAA/CINCPACREP GUAM/TTP1 GUAM MARIANAS ISLANDS
 RUHQHQA/CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
 RUWJAJA/COMTWELVE SAN FRANCISCO CA
 RUEHDT /US MISSION TO UN NEW YORK NY
 RUEHKO /AMEMB TOKYO JA

BT
 UNCLAS.
 FROM STATUS LNO 99
 PASS INTERIOR FOR OMSN AND DOTA
 COMTWELVE FOR AMB WILLIAMS
 CINCPAC FOR POLAD
 E.O. 11652: N/A
 TAGS: PINT TO

SUBJECT: NORTHERN MARIANAS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION BILL

1. NORTHERN MARIANAS CONCON BILL WAS PASSED BY NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS LEGISLATURE (NMIL) MAY 18 AFTER ALMOST FOUR WEEKS OF SHARP DEBATE AND MANY CHANGES AND COMPROMISES.
2. MAIN ISSUE DELAYING PASSAGE WAS METHOD OF SELECTING DELEGATES. DEBATE WAS HEATED AS EACH SENATOR ADVOCATED HIS PREFERRED METHOD. FIRST DRAFT HAD PROPOSED 37 DELEGATES BE SELECTED AT LARGE BY MUNICIPALITY. MANY FELT THIS METHOD WOULD NOT ENSURE ADEQUATE CAROLINIAN REPRESENTATION AT CONCON WHILE OTHERS FELT IT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST CANDIDATES WHO WERE NOT WELL KNOWN THROUGHOUT ISLAND. BILL AS FINALLY PASSED STATES THAT 25 DELEGATES FROM SAIPAN WILL BE ELECTED AT LARGE WITH THREE TOP CAROLINIAN VOTE-GETTERS AUTOMATICALLY BECOMING DELEGATES. SOME LEGISLATORS OBJECTED TO RECOGNITION OF ETHNIC DIVISIONS IN MARIANAS AND SAID ALL PEOPLE SHOULD BE TREATED SIMPLY AS "CITIZENS OF NORTHERN MARIANAS." DELEGATS FROM OTHER ISLANDS TINIAN (5), ROTA (8) AND NORTHERN ISLANDS (1) WILL BE ELECTED AT LARGE FROM EACH ISLAND.
3. TINIAN AND ROTA, WITH 13 DELEGATES, ARE GREATLY OVERREPRESENTED IN PROPORTION TO POPULATION. SMALLER ISLANDS INSISTED ON THIS PROPORTION TO PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS AND SAIPANESE LEGISLATORS AGREED IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE PASSAGE OF BILL WITH LEAST ANIMOSITY. THIS ARRANGEMENT WILL GIVE SMALLER ISLANDS VETO POWER TO CONVENTION SINCE

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- CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS MUST PASS BY 3/4 MAJORITY.
4. ELECTION WILL BE HELD PLACE JULY 12, 1976, WITH RESIDENT COMMISSIONER ACTING AS ELECTION COMMISSIONER.
 5. A PRECONVENTION COMMITTEE IS CALLED FOR CONSISTING OF SPEAKER OF NMIL AND DELEGATES FROM SAIPAN, ROTA, AND TINIANI TO ORGANIZE CONCON WITH COOPERATION OF OFFICE FOR TRANSITION STUDIES AND NMIL AND TO SET DATE FOR CONVENING OF CONCON, WHICH MUST BE PRIOR TO AUGUST 2, 1976, FOR A SESSION NOT LONGER THAN 50 CONSECUTIVE DAYS.
 6. DURING HEARINGS, SEVERAL PROMINENT CITIZENS QUESTIONED LARGE SIZE AND LONG DURATION OF CONCON ASKING WHETHER IT MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO DO IT LESS EXPENSIVELY. THESE OBJECTIONS WERE UNSUCCESSFUL.
 7. CONCON IS CHARGED WITH DRAFTING A CONSTITUTION IN CONFORMITY WITH COMMONWEALTH COVENANT PROVIDING FOR A BILL OF RIGHTS, AND A REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT WITH THREE SEPARATE BRANCHES.
 8. UPON COMPLETION OF CONVENTION, AND AFTER NOT MORE THAN 120 DAYS, RESIDENT COMMISSIONER SHALL CONDUCT POLITICAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN AND CALL A REFERENDUM.
 9. CONSTITUTION WILL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN RATIFIED IF APPROVED BY 60 PERCENT OF PEOPLE CASTING VOTES AND WOULD THEN BE SENT TO USG FOR APPROVAL.
 10. FINANCIAL FUNDING WILL COME FROM \$30,000 PROVIDED IN BILL AND FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM OFFICE OF TRANSITION STUDIES; NMIL AND OFFICE FOR TRANSITION STUDIES WILL PROVIDE STAFF SUPPORT; BERGESSEN

04-426130