

Government of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Director of Public Works

Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

November 19, 1976
Ser. No. PW23500

Mr. Lorenzo I. Guerrero, President
Constitutional Convention
Government of the Northern Mariana Islands
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. Guerrero:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 15, 1976, and a copy of the draft Constitutional provisions. The opportunity given me to express my views on the provisions is indeed appreciated. Unfortunately, the time allotted for presentation of such view is so inadequate that it is doubtful if thoroughly analyzed views can be presented in such time frame. I do have, however, cursory observations and would be happy to manifest them here. Briefly they are:

1. Proposed Expenditures: Glancing through the provisions one can not help but noticing the tremendous sum of money it would require to govern the very small Northern Marianas land area and equally small population. It is quite apparent that the proposed governmental structure is much too expansive for comparatively small number of people it will serve.

Perhaps the governmental structural proposition is appealing to the naked eye, but can the people really afford it? Should the people of the Northern Marianas be overburden with taxation just so that sustenance of an expanded governmental structure be maintained? If not, how else would it be financed aside from the usual grants, and federal aids, which are unreliable sources because they are reflections of U.S. national economy?

The anticipated total revenue in the Northern Marianas is minimal because of its small population and the non-productive nature of its economy. It stands to reason then that the future Government should be sized also to commensurate with the anticipated revenue. It would be ridiculously uneconomical for the Government to expend

more than what it can generate. To assume continuous federal aids to finance local government is merely a suspension of existence. The totality of the new government's economical-financial capability should be realistically considered. Our neighbor's plight (Guam) is an example to study and not to emulate.

Another area of concern is internal development. With the anticipated "operating cost" of the new Government proportionately high, is it capable of upgrading, adding, and maintaining additional services for the people, particularly the utilities, highways, medical, educational, and all the ramifications of services in general? Will there be genuine improvements over that we are coping and groping with presently?

Obviously everything hinges on the Almighty Dollar!

2. Restrictions on Alienation of Land - Article XII: The intent here -- that to protect the people of the Northern Marianas -- is commendable, but the inconsistency is very obvious. In the first place, the people of the Northern Marianas is saying they want to join the "American Political Family System", which is based on the philosophy of equality. Yet, the proposed article violates against equality and promotes discrimination against fellow citizens. It is inimical to the United States Constitution, and, ultimately, it may not stand before the court. And, it also glows with a tinge of racism.

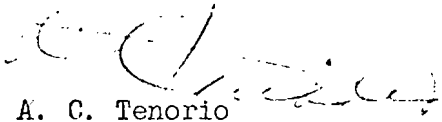
It is admirable that the Northern Marianas Government has taken the stand of a "Guardian Angel" to protect its peoples' properties. However, in a Democracy, it is far commendable to educate the people of its cultural values, which includes traditional land tenure system, then to legislate protective measures and prolong their ignorance.

There are already many, many intelligent people here who understand the value of holding family properties. The few who do not will never learn in twenty-five years or fifty years this value system. They may cease to exist, but there will always be others to take their places and continue to squander their wealth, whatever these may be worth. After all, it is their property, and in a Democracy, individuals can do whatever they like with their own properties. Contrast this system of freedom of ownership and sales transaction with that of a Communistic State system.

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Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express comments here and there on your monumental work. My sincere success to your leadership and your conventional group.

Sincerely,



A. C. Tenorio
Director of Public Works