

July 8, 1985

REC'D
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Dear Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of this Committee:

As a citizen of the CNMI who was fortunate to be born in our beautiful islands to the north, I wish to offer these serious comments regarding the proposal before us.

As I see it, the real issue behind this proposal to abolish the Office of Mayor of the Northern Islands is the issue of development--or should I say, the lack of development. During my lifetime I have seen these islands decline as income-producing islands. But the decline was caused by, and directly related to the frequency of shipping services and the amount of government services that are readily available there to our people.

During the Navy times, for example, shipping service was frequent. Agrigan had 40 families; Pagan had about another 40 families; Anatahan, 20; Alamagan, 15; and Sariguan, eight families. These families worked hard and sweated in the hope that someday they would have land there to call their own. For three decades these people worked these islands. But over the years, priorities set by the Trust Territory government changed and essential government services, such as shipping, declined. And with it, the population of the islands declined.

In my opinion, to pass this proposal would permanently close and seal the door to development for these islands forever. In fact, if we truly believe in development, we should be entertaining proposals to do the opposite. We should be finding ways and means to promote and advance progress and foster development in these islands. I, for one, am convinced that these islands can develop on their own, pay their own way, and become what they should be: An economic asset for all the people of the Commonwealth. In recent memory, for example, one developer proposed to build a resort on one island; another island was considered for a oil storage depot. The islands are also potential

source for thermo-energy. But even without such grand proposals, growth and development in these islands should and must be encouraged not discouraged. This is especially true now, in today's world of solar energy, better communications and so forth. I strongly believe that it is the responsibility of all the delegates to this Con-Con to ensure that the rights of all the people of the Commonwealth are protected, and this includes the people and families who invested many of the best years of their lives working in the Northern Islands.

I, for one, am convinced that with proper government support and backing, the office of Mayor for these islands can prove itself to be an asset for all the CNMI. It should function as a clearing-house to attract U.S. Federal Rural Development Funds, in addition to development capital from private investors from the outside. To eliminate the Office of Mayor is to eliminate chances for these islands, and the people of these islands, to exist and develop side-by-side with the rest of the Commonwealth.

Saipan has always been the center of developments next to Tinian and Rota, the Northern Islands can become the center of some very exciting and creative new developments for all our people in the future. These islands have potential, and for those of us who have enough vision to see this potential, I say let's reject this proposal to close the door, which will only bring more neglect to these islands.

Let's not rub salt on the wounds on the people of the Northern Islands who have been suffering from neglect all these years. Let's help them by keeping the government framework to promote development. Let's create a climate for growth. Let's not put a freeze on development for anyone, anywhere. Let's make it work for us. Let us maintain the rule of democratic government and keep an elected leader who can best guide and work for the best interests of these islands and people. Let's develop these islands for everyone's benefit, not for just the people who died and have their graves there. Let it not be said that an

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injustice to these islands and people was done by the delegates to this
Con-Con. To me, Mr. Chairman, this proposal puts a freeze on good
government and a freeze on development.

Therefore, it must be rejected by this Committee and this Convention.

Let's foster and promote development of all our citizens.

Thank you.

David Kepileo Peter

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TA' LAAMWAR

Chairman