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TINIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

San Jose Village
Tinian, MP 96952
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July 29, 1995

Honorable Herman T. Guerrero *HKS*
President
Third Constitutional Convention
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear President Guerrero:

Thank you for giving the Tinian Women's Association the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments to the Constitution. We would like to state some concerns with respect to education which we have three main concerns.

First, under the proposed amendment, the responsibility for the direction of the educational system rests with one person, the Secretary of Education, rather than facilitating the collective input of several people. Although the community is given the opportunity to elect their local school board, their voice is without force since it makes their elected local board 'toothless watchdogs' who have to administer the guidelines set by the Governor's appointee. Consequently, it is erroneous to make the local boards responsible for the quality of education because they have no voice in policy making and in determining the direction of the system.

Our second concern has to do with funding. Under the proposed amendment, the appointed Secretary will control the local school board by restricting the flow of funds based on compliance to his/her policies. To give one person the power with respect to funds for each school district who are also subjected to policies created by the same person is an unwise and dangerous precedence.

With respect to the allocation of instructional funds on a per student enrolled basis, it is necessary to clearly define what the term per student/classroom teaching costs means. The guaranteed funding of the present system has merits in that education is protected from other competing interests. This protection is important because, as we have seen, Commonwealth legislative history will tell that most legislators have not made education their true priority.

The status quo is a workable structure; the difficulties have to do with the intra-mechanisms/players and subsystems. This structure may be enhanced by making the players more accountable to the legislature with regard to the expenditure of guaranteed and/or additional funding. It was claimed that 15% funding level was not enough nor could a magic number be arrived at, one option will be to maintain the present 15% funding level with the condition that the board justify the expenditure of all funds allocated to education. Another option will be to base the guaranteed funding on the true cost of educating a student which may rise or fall based on the economic climate of the CNMI.

Finally, there has to be some mechanism to link all public institutions, presently PSS and NMC, in order to ensure that the educational needs of the Commonwealth are meeting the future occupational needs of the islands.

Again, thank you for welcoming our comments.

Hafa Adai,



Deborah Fleming Clark
President

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July 29, 1995

Honorable Herman T. Guerrero *H.T.G.*
President
Third Constitutional Convention
Commonwealth of the Northern
Mariana Islands
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear President Guerrero:

Thank you for giving the Tinian Women's Association the opportunity to comment on several proposed amendments to the Constitution. We would like to state some concerns with respect to civil service excepted positions, specifically elected officials personal staff.

The current and recurrent practice of discriminate hiring of an overabundance of uneducated, unskilled, underutilized, highly compensated citizens commonly categorized as "political hirees" must not be protected. This practice has been and is a negative example to children especially students; a blatant example that persons do not need education for a meaningful life and progression). It is obvious that this "excepted position" need to be strict. It would be to the Commonwealths long-term betterment to instill Civil Service standards across the board. Cognizant that it would of great hardship to a great number of our citizens to put in place the CSS without a transitional remediation. Our thought is to maintain status quo for a given period (say 3 years) whereby all employees under this category who are not high school graduate/equivalence and unskilled are mandated to attend "school" during the regular government hours and must prove their attendance and progression in order to get his/her payroll. At the end of this "getting skilled" period said "employees" have a more meaningful means of livelihood. Gradually, said employees are absorbed by the private sector.

This may be done in concert with the educational systems, the private sector and the affected offices.

We hope this convention can address this problem.

Sincerely,

Deborah Fleming Clark
Deborah Fleming Clark
President

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