

Aldan smaller Senate proposal:

'Opposition is about jobs'

RESPONDING to claims that downsizing the Senate from 9 to 6 would weaken the Legislature, Tomas B. Aldan, Chair of the Convention's Committee on the Legislative Branch and Public Finance, said that the opposition is just about jobs.

"The proposed Con-Con amendments will strengthen the Legislature by giving it better procedures and stronger support. The real opposition is that some jobs will be lost."

Aldan said that the first consideration is the number of positions that aspiring politicians can run for.

With the Senate reduced to two per island, that means that someone in the party will have to run for another office.

"This issue about the number of jobs for the politicians caused a walk-

out in the First Con-Con back in 1976," Aldan said.

"Some of the Rota delegates and one of the Tinian delegates walked out back then and refused to sign the original Constitution because Rota was being reduced from two members of the House to just one. It was just about jobs. The fact is, Rota and Tinian work quite well in the House with one representative."

The second part of the opposition is the number of positions for the supporters of the politicians.

One Senator supports quite a few people, Aldan explained, with community worker jobs and other kinds of jobs.

"Being a Senator gives a politician quite a lot of importance in the community because of the number of jobs

attached to that office. So, of course these people are opposed to reducing the size of the Senate."

When asked about the argument that reducing the size of the Senate would harm the quality of debate, Aldan said the Convention heard those arguments from the Senate's legal counsel during the debates but did not credit them.

"The School Board functions with 5 members. The Civil Service Commission functions with 7 members. The Municipal Councils function with 3 members. As I said, this is about jobs, it is not about quality of debate," Aldan reiterated.

"We looked up the number of areas on the mainland with many times our population that are governed by a council or legislative body of 6 or 4 members. They all seem to function just fine. The argument about quality of debate is just a camouflage."

Aldan also responded to the question about whether downsizing the



Tomas B. Aldan

Senate will really save money.

"We have to look to the future. We need to cut back now, otherwise we won't ever do it. We save some money now, but we will save a lot over the years."

Aldan pointed to the Legislative Initiative that was on the ballot last November.

"The Senate voted for a \$9 million pot of money for the Legislature. That was quite a large increase over the current constitutional limit of \$2.8 million for the Legislature and \$800,000 for the Legislative Bureau. That is just an indication of what is coming in the future if we don't cut back."

It is always hard to cut back the size of the government, Aldan said, and pointed out that the Convention didn't just cut back the Senate.

"We cut the House from 19 to 13. We cut the Civil Service Commission from 7 to 5. We cut the special offices from the Executive Branch. We also put limits on the Executive Branch hiring when there is a deficit.

"We didn't just single out the Senate. Everyone has to make a contribution if we are to control the size of our government. We think we did the cuts fairly and on a basis that serves the Commonwealth," he added.

No jail for gun possession

By Ferdie de la Torre
Variety News Staff

A WOMAN charged for illegal

a Korean man convicted in connection with a theft and forgery case in 1993