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CONFERENCE, THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, CONCERNING THE TRUST
TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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20025 East Quentin Avenue
Hastings, Minnesota 55033

31 January 1983

Memo to: To those concerned about human rights, militarism and United
States-Micronesian relations

Subject: 1982 NCC Resolution on Micronesia and the 10 February 1983 plebiscite in
Palau, one of the new Micronesian nations.

I am concerned about the plebiscite in Palau and the quality of the political education programmes which will precede the plebiscite and the conditions which will allow the Micronesians to make a truly informed and hence free choice. Our contacts in Palau tell us that the February date is still too early. Summer would be a better time. This concern is heightened when we read that the Palauan Senate has expressed "disapproval of the inadequate work being done by the political education programme and the lack of information and vast amount of misinformation," and that it is "the Senate's opinion that renegotiations should be pursued regarding these sections of the compact prior to the plebiscite."

A second concern is the wording of the ballot. The language of the second question under proposition one is quite misleading. It characterizes the subsidiary agreement with respect to radioactive, chemical and biological materials as restricting and placing conditions on the United States. However, in regard to nuclear weapons, this is untrue. Article IV, section 4, of the agreement under discussion reads as follows:

"The Government of the United States shall permit the presence of nuclear weapons in Palau only incident to transit and overflight, during a national emergency declared by the President of the United States, during a state of war declared by the Congress of the United States, in order to defend against

an actual or impending armed attack on the United States or Palau, including a threat of such an attack or during a time of other military necessity as determined by the Government of the United States."

This wording clearly does not restrict or place meaningful conditions on the United States since they can determine the military necessity apparently without even consulting the Palauan Government. In fact, a 75 per cent majority vote is necessary on proposition one, question 2 because the agreement is contrary to the Palau Constitution which has a complete restriction on nuclear, chemical, gas or biological weapons. The Constitution states:

"Harmful substances such as nuclear, chemical, gas or biological weapons intended for use in warfare, nuclear power plants, and waste materials therefrom, shall not be used, tested, stored or disposed of within the territorial jurisdiction of Palau without the express approval of not less than three-fourths (3/4) of the votes cast in a referendum submitted on this specific question."

Thus, unless a political education programme is conducted carefully and/or the wording of the ballot is changed, a Palauan citizen who in three constitutional referendums has supported the "nuclear-free" concept unknowingly could vote against it this time around!

A final concern at this time also refers to the wording of the ballot. If proposition two is to be representative and effective as an advisory vote, it must be obligatory and include three options. The words "You may" should be deleted before "Mark your ballot". The options should be restated as follows:

- (a) A relationship with the United States closer than free association as set forth in the present agreements;
- (b) A relationship of free association with the United States but less close than that described in the present agreements;
- (c) Independence.

Thank you for your concern and may this letter help you to decide to postpone the plebiscite in Palau and re-word the ballot.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Maureen GERE (Mrs. Charles M.)
Mission Co-ordinator for Christian
Global Concerns
Minnesota Conference
United Methodist Women
