

On My Mind

2/18/05

Well, the Azmar mouthpiece has loosed another blast, and what a venomous blast it was! Don Farrell, esteemed author of the only history textbook of the CNMI, fell into the gutter, one might say - or off his pedestal? - in loosing a scurrilous tirade against Cinta Kaipat in a long letter to the editor that appeared in Tuesday's Saipan Tribune.</P>

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I won't repeat what he said, but it was personal, vindictive, mean-spirited, and totally un-called-for. Cinta is highly regarded in the community, has won honor and recognition for her work in supporting and defending the interests of the CNMI's Northern Islanders, has been instrumental in organizing Pagan Watch, a web site that offers a wealth of information about Pagan and the antics of Azmar and the Marianas Public Land Authority, and has just been nominated by her peers and colleagues for the prestigious Ford Foundation Leadership Award. To drag her name through the mud as Farrell has done is unwarranted, despicable, malicious.</P>

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Farrell then goes on at great length about an alleged agreement between the MPLA and Azmar, whereby Azmar had only to provide its "name, rank and serial number," in effect, in order to meet MPLA requirements for being given a lease that would allow it to mine Pagan's pozzolan ash. If it is indeed true, as Farrell alleges, that the MPLA chairwoman told Azmar that it need provide only the name of its business, its charter and by-laws, corporate papers, business license, tax number, personal financial statement and a "revised pro-forma" - whatever that is - and it would be given the lease then she - and all else who agreed - should be fired, immediately.</P>

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Moreover, this information was to be provided on a confidential basis! If ever there was a more absurd, irresponsible, ignorant, stupid, offer, I've yet to see it. Imagine! Giving away the rights to an island's minerals with no more than that! No requirement for a business plan, no requirement for a statement of financial stability, no description of the operation involved - nothing! Especially when compared to the extensive requirements made of Pacific Telecom Inc. in the acquisition of MTC, MPLA's stipulation - if true - was and is simplistic indeed!</P>

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Farrell is a good writer. No doubt about that. But for reasons known best to himself, he has put his talents to use in support of a company with questionable credentials - one, that, furthermore, has not been able, or willing, to substantiate its claims to respectability and credibility. It's a pity, for it has tarnished his credibility as well, quite badly.</P>

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Another person who's lost credibility - in my eyes, at least - is former House Speaker Heinz Hofschneider, for voting against Congressman Clyde Norita's proposal to make the legislature part-time. A "self-insult" indeed! (which is what Hofschneider labeled the proposal.) Most communities the size of the CNMI - with a total population of less than 100,000, are typically managed by a city manager, or a mayor, not a full-fledged house, senate, executive branch and judiciary!</P>

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And if, as the Covenant says it must, the CNMI has to maintain a bi-cameral legislature in addition to its governor, then at least it could do so on a far smaller scale than it does now.

