

On My Mind
12/20/02

What I wish Santa Claus would bring to the CNMI:

- first of all, the ability to prioritize, <I>intelligently and rationally</I>, to everyone from the Governor - who put money for taxpayer rebates and refunds first - to the many agencies who believe their needs should go first: the Public School System for books and learning materials; the Retirement Fund for pension payments, the Commonwealth Health Center's for payments to its third party administrator, Finance for matching funds for FEMA and Capitol Improvement Projects, Personnel for government pay raises, Public Works for finishing the land fill, etc., etc., - to the legislature, which must accommodate the needs and appropriate the funds. So far no one except the House Speaker, it seems, is making any effort to look at the over-all picture, to weigh the short and long-term benefits, to analyze the data or the trade-offs, is either willing or able to assign priorities to the many conflicting demands or to bring any sense of reasonableness and order to the picture;

- next, the backbone, to enough people in government, to see that the priorities are implemented, once they have been set;

- further, the courage, to members of the Legislature, to cut such extravagances from the CNMI budget as rebates, 30% retirement bonuses, over-the-limit salaries, qualifying certificates and free trade zone tax giveaways;

- also, the clarity of vision - to everyone from the Governor on down - to recognize that if rational steps are not taken - very soon - to better control and cut expenditures, the CNMI is headed for economic chaos and disaster;

- last but not least, the strength, to the Lieutenant Governor, to maintain his identity, integrity and independence;

- as well as the proverbial orange in the stocking to everyone at the Commonwealth Utilities Commission for continuous power during Supertyphoon Pongsana; to the director and staff of the Public Auditor's Office for the agency's responsive, objective, award-winning performance; to House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider for his commitment to accountability in government;

- and a dozen proverbial oranges to the <I>Pacific Daily News</I> for not missing a single day in publishing its paper even at the height of Supertyphoon Pongsana;

- and, finally, the proverbial lump of coal to Continental Airlines for refusing to bring last week's issues of the <I>Pacific Daily News</I> to Saipan, and for its continuing unfriendly flight departure hours and to its Saipan office in particular for being so unreachable by phone.

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To the President of the United States and the rest of his like-minded cronies I wish Santa would bring a sense of humility and compassion, the recognition that might is not always the right answer, and the realization that Westernization and globalization are neither synonymous, nor universally benign;

To warring peoples throughout the world, the awareness that killing does not solve problems, and the determination and persistence to find resolution through peaceful means;

And to all the rest of us in the world, I wish that Santa would bring strength, faith, hope, peace.

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This is, after all, meant to be the season of love and understanding, of hope and trust, of devotion to a higher being and respect for all earth's creatures. Let us all resolve to help make it so - in our homes, in our families, in our villages, in our world.

May the spirit of the season remain with you throughout the year, and may the New Year bring better times to all.

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<I>This column will next appear on January 10, 2003.</I>