

## On My Mind

11/23/07

Water, water, everywhere - and it's all going to waste. Some of it refills the aquifers, to be sure, but a lot of it just washes out the roads and dumps the sediment on the corals in the lagoon, muddying the water, killing coral and ruining fish habitat.

No one seems interested in building on-island reservoirs, to catch the water for island use. But would anyone be interested in "harvesting" that water, and shipping it off-island to areas that are suffering real drought?

That's not such an outlandish idea. Some water transport over the oceans is already occurring, and there's no reason why the CNMI could not get involved in the same thing. Parts of Australia are experiencing severe drought at the moment, and it would not be all that long a trip to fill tankers with water and ship it down there. There are no doubt other regions within reasonable shipping distance to whom the CNMI could ship its excess water as well.

I'm not sure of the logistics here, but if those tankers could come back with goods needed by the CNMI, it would make for a doubly worthwhile venture, since the ships would not have to travel empty one way.

While the CNMI does not have heavy rains throughout the year, and would not, therefore, have water to transport during dry season, perhaps the water fleet could move to a spot where the rainy season differed from that of the CNMI, and alternate seasons.

It's said that success and growth come from the ability to change, and to adapt to change. Well, here's an opportunity to do just that.....

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Since the governor is reported to have said (see the 11/08/07 issue of the *Saipan Tribune* on page 4) that he is transferring responsibility for "the administration's economic efforts" to the lieutenant governor, guess the above suggestion should be made to that office, rather than the governor's.

The announcement, buried in a story about the governor's request for the resignation of his cabinet members, has gotten only minimum notice. It is, nonetheless, worthy of note. Since the CNMI Constitution does not specifically charge the governor with making economic efforts, one cannot say that Fitial is abdicating his responsibilities by turning that one over to his subordinate. But the Constitution does say that the governor is responsible for "the faithful execution of the laws." Article II, Section 1.

Will he, therefore, in re-assuming, one supposes, responsibility for administration and government operations, also assume responsibility for enforcing the many laws on the books that are not now enforced? Now that would be a major achievement! Assuming, of course, that it were done even-handedly, and without bias.

Which brings up the question of the notices of non-renewal of contracts that are being issued by the administration. Does anyone know by what criteria the decisions are

being made as to who gets notices and who doesn't? What logic, what principles of organization, efficiency, economics, are being used in deciding whom to terminate?

Or is the intent here not so much to cut the government payroll, as to open up jobs for other than those people already in those jobs - like Covenant party members who weren't elected, and their supporters? Who will get newly hired bears watching.....

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Deserving much more than mere watching is the latest issue of the *Commonwealth Register*, which appeared on November 21<sup>st</sup>, though dated the 19<sup>th</sup>, and this month totals a big fat 336 pages. At least the AG's office has issued some of the *Register* issues printed double sided! The longest sections are the Division of Environmental Quality's 104 pages of proposed air quality regulations and the Department of Labor's 79 pages of proposed new regulations.

As can be expected in so massive a publication, there are a few errors. One is in the proposed amendments to the taxicab regulations. While the purpose statement lists six proposed changes, there is actual text for only one of them. The statement of goals and objectives, as well as the summary of amendments being proposed for the Retirement Fund have not been translated into Chamorro and Carolinian. Nor do the notices of certification of adoption of regulations for the Board of Accountancy, the Board of Nurse Examiners, the Medical Licensing Board have Chamorro or Carolinian translations.

Two interesting anomalies appear in the notice of adopted regulations for the Garapan Street Market. First off, they do not define WHERE the street market will or should be located, which would seem to imply that it can be moved at some future point. Why it hasn't been moved to the Paseo is beyond understanding. The other is that while fees for all other vendors are clearly indicated to cover specific time frames, there is no time given for how long an artist's fee is good.

Not so trivial is the fact that the 13-page emergency regulations that provide for the power rate increase do far more than merely change the amount being charged. The proposed regulations would do away with giving non-profit organizations a choice as to whether they will be billed as residential or commercial. The sections stating that the monthly customer charge and the electric non-fuel rates were determined by the rate study conducted by Economics.com have been deleted, leading to the conclusion that they now may bear little relationship to reality.

The emergency regulations propose that both the electric non-fuel rate and the monthly customer charges for residential customers shall now remain in effect for approximately one year - unless unanticipated circumstances warrant an earlier change. Until now, apparently residential customers had not been included in the unadjusted one-year period.

The emergency regs also propose changes to the methodology for calculating bills. Being mathematically challenged, and not having understood the initial formula, much less the new one, I cannot say more except that it has been changed.

The proposed amendments begin with an unsettling new section stating that electric rates and charges shall be sufficient to recover all costs "provided , however, that the electric rates for residential customers shall be in accordance with Public Law 15-94, notwithstanding the actual costs of providing services to residential customers." I have no idea what that means, but it doesn't sound very auspicious to me.

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Short takes:

Not only has he asked for the resignation of its members, but now the governor has announced he doesn't even want to meet with his Cabinet anymore. He only wants to meet the members on a one-to-one basis. But then how will the numerous department heads learn what the others are doing, whether there is overlap, where opportunities are for working together, what needs coordination between them? Another symptom of the governor's inability to work with others?

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It's not anywhere near New Year's, but already fireworks, and especially those "bomb-sounding" ones are being set off in the neighborhood. Little fireworks around Christmas and New Years are bad enough, but the larger ones should be banned entirely. They upset man and beast alike.....

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I had my issues with Representative Cinta Kaipat and her unyielding support of CNMI's so-called labor reform bill, but I would not have wished her out of the legislature. Jeff Turbitt's tribute to Cinta in the 11/21 issue of the <EM>Marianas Variety</EM> says it all, and says it well. Thanks, Jeff! Not that I'm saying Tina Sablan should not have won. But it's a pity that voters could not find it in their hearts and minds to elect both.

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The Christmas gift exhibit up at the CNMI Arts Gallery on Capitol Hill is still getting in new pieces. Most striking is an exhibit of carved skulls, added just this week. Call 664-2573 for hours open. Another local artist gift display promising some interesting choices will be held 12/01 and 12/02 at the multi-purpose center in Susupe. Both are worth checking out.....

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New movies: FIVE new ones! "Enchanted," rated PG, "Beowulf" and "This Christmas," rated PG-13, and "Hitman" and "The Mist," rated R, for a total of 1 G, 3 PGs, 2 PG-13s, and 2 R's - not a bad ratio, with four of this week's top box-office hits, and three of this week's new openings, according to < [www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com) >.