

7/22/11

The *Saipan Tribune* "Question of the Week" asks, "After Friday's hearing, do you support Kilili's HR 1466 to grant status to certain groups of people in the CNMI?" I, for one, have voted "yes." I had been torn between the position taken by Kilili - who wrote the bill - and that taken by Wendy Doromol - who is totally opposed to it. I highly admire both people and what they stand for, and both offered logical arguments for their positions.

CNMI's non-voting delegate to Congress Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan's HR 1466 would improve the status of four categories of foreign worker in the CNMI; Wendy Doromol, former Rota teacher and zealous protector and supporter of the rights of CNMI's foreign workers, calls the bill discriminatory, insisting that the bill should address the status of all foreign workers in the CNMI.

But in the end, I have come to the conclusion that in this case, Kilili's approach would at least solve one problem in the over-all immigration dilemma/disarray faced by the CNMI's foreign workers, and appears to have a good chance of succeeding as well, whereas Doromol's approach, which seeks an absolute solution to all the problems faced by the CNMI's foreign workers, faces a much larger hurdle.

One could say that the ideal yielded to the pragmatic. Perhaps so. But sometimes one progresses faster if one takes several small steps rather than a single larger leap. At least if HR 1466 passes, that is one less exception, one less "special condition" that need be dealt with in the over-all omnibus bill dealing with worker status in the CNMI.

As *Trib* reporter Mark Rbago remarked in one of his stories, "HR 1466 makes strange bedfellows." It can also make for strained relations between erstwhile "bedfellows." Wendy, Rabby, please forgive me! I hope you will understand.....

In follow-up to last week's comments re humans affecting eco-systems, another example concerns the dingo - an animal very similar to a dog that is wild on Fraser Island, a designated National Park in Australia. In 1991, the island's dingo population, then between 200 to 300 animals, was believed to be 'the largest genetically unhybridised population on the east coast of Australia'.

Aggressive dingoes that stray from their packs and invade human territory are usually killed. The same, by the way, is true of bears in Yellowstone National Park in the U.S. According to report in an October 2009 issue of *Science Alert*, Nick Alexander writes, "However, the practice of culling any 'problem' animal can, potentially, dislocate the dingo pack structure by removing adult animals. The pack relies on these elders to maintain the social order, and help teach the younger animals how to hunt." With only about 100 dingoes now left, there is serious concern that "their genetic viability over the long term is being compromised." Are we also breeding out the stronger, healthier bears? For more on the dingoes, see <
<http://www.sciencealert.com.au/features/20091910-20025.html> >.

In what may be too far a stretch, one is tempted to ask, as well, whether war doesn't tend to do something similar, by "culling" from the human gene pool, those who are brave, hardy, smart.

There's a store on Saipan selling noni juice allegedly sourced and packaged on Saipan - though there's no label specifically stating as much. The package has "Saipan USA" stamped on it, and also a seal that says "Since 2004 Saipan USA." This would appear to be false advertising, but even if there were a law on the books prohibiting it, there's little enforcement, and the store continues in business, continuing to mislead tourists.

More noteworthy, though, is this store's bias towards Japanese tourists. The staff speaks little English. Though there is literature available on the various noni products, none are in a language other than Japanese. If it really were a genuine Saipan product, wouldn't the Chinese, Korean, Russian tourists be just as eager to buy it, bring it home?

I've been accused, by the *Marianas Variety*, of being insensitive - and have, in fact, been banished from the editor's Blackberry - because of the impression that the *Saipan Tribune* appears to be credited in this column more often than is the *Variety*. Not sure whether that has made me more sensitive or not, but I thought this Friday's editorial and "Variations" column in the *Variety* very much on target.

I liked the scorn for the likelihood of the proposed 60% contribution by the Retirement Fund to employee pensions: "On that day pigs will also fly." I agree with the list of unnecessary budget allocations (Youth Congress, Liberation Day festivities, special assistants), the questioning of the mayor's office vs the municipal council vs the local delegation, the take on reunification with Guam. All were plainly, simply, straightforwardly presented, with no histrionics.

Though this week's "Variations" - reviewing the governor's attitudinal variances toward foreign workers over the years - was put in considerably stronger, more colorful terms, nonetheless, I would support it too. Zaldy has a memory, a way with words, much to be envied.

Short takes:

- In an interview reported in the *Saipan Tribune*, House member Froilan Tenorio has claimed that a casino could be up and running within a year, since no new buildings would be needed. Among other things, the bill as it now stands calls for a minimum investment of \$100 million dollars. What investor would put up that much money just for a license? A license, moreover, for a casino on an small minimally- populated island that would be dependent on customers brought in by airlines that presently offer only minimum service and over which the island has no control?

- The *Variety*'s two-part story on Escolastica Tudela Cabrera brings back many fond memories: lively political discussions over soba lunches at the snack bar/restaurant on Capitol Hill, the wonderful variety store in Susupe where one could find everything and anything one could imagine, her cheerful presence everywhere - what an admirable, indomitable personage! Great story, Lexie! And a deep bow of respect to Madam Esco!