

# FORUM

A Meeting Place For Our Opinions... And Yours...

## EDITORIALS

### Not now

THIS newspaper earlier urged the administration to at least hear out the proponents of the Pew marine monument proposal. We have, moreover, published several letters for and against it. Debates and discussions about significant issues are always good, and now that we have heard both sides, we have come to conclusion that the local community support required by this undertaking is simply not there.

This is not a question of whether the monument proposal is good or bad for the NMI — but of whether the local community can stomach what some perceive as yet another unilateral attempt by an “outsider” to “take away” yet another portion of local cultural identity. The marine monument proponents can, of course, ridicule this sentiment, but it is real, and it is out there as indicated by the near unanimous adoption of a legislative resolution opposing the proposal “at this time.”

The local people are witnessing their government losing control over minimum wage and, soon, immigration. They watch silently while “outsiders” assert “rights” and “demand justice” on the local people’s islands, even as local traditions fade into disuse and neglect, and their overall quality of life deteriorates rapidly. Now they are told that they must also give up three of their Northern Islands.

“What will be left for the NMI?” ask the local people.

Dismissing or insulting these “unsophisticated” notions will not win over those who hold them. The marine monument proposal must have the local people’s backing. At this point, its proponents must take one on the chin, and acknowledge that they have to do a better job of reaching out to the local community and its elected leaders.