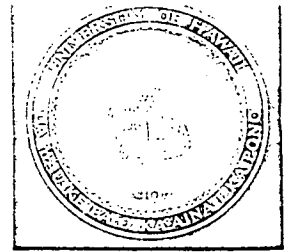


UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96822



EDUCATION FOR PLANNING PROJECT  
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96822

May 10, 1967

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lieutenant Governor Gill  
SUBJECT: The Congress of Micronesia

There are three major problems concerning the Congress of Micronesia which should receive immediate consideration: (1) the role of the Congress in the budget process, (2) the pay of congressmen and (3) the availability of technical assistance to members of the Congress. We suggest that the budget process be revised so that the Micronesians can begin to play a significant part in the formulation and presentation of the budget. We also believe that the Congressmen must be paid sufficiently well to permit service in the Congress to be a full time job. Thirdly, we are convinced that the Congress has to have access to its own sources of assistance in formulating public policy. The remainder of this memorandum deals with these points.

1. The budget process.

The Congress of Micronesia does not effectively participate in the formulation of the budget. The Congress meets in July and at that time receives the budget from the Administration which is to be enacted by the U.S. Congress approximately a year later. This budget must be submitted to Interior in August or September. It is then processed by the Bureau of the Budget and submitted by the President to the U.S. Congress in January of the following year. There is little way that the Congress of Micronesia can effectively participate in the process when any advice that it is going to offer must be determined during a 30 day session. Furthermore, it is very difficult to integrate the U.S. Budget and the local revenue budget because they are on different time schedules.

Once the administrations in Saipan and Washington are committed to increasing Micronesian participation in the budget process then the means of accomplishing this end can be determined.

One possibility would be for the Congress to begin participating in the budgetary process in January through its finance or interim committees. This poses a problem every second year when the legislature would not yet have organized after the election. A second possibility is to have informal participation before the Congress meets in July and perhaps even arrange for a special session of the Congress in September at which time it could act on the budget. This procedure would still leave the problem of how to integrate programs financed from local revenues with those financed from federal sources. These problems, however, can be solved; what is required at this time is to recognize that (1) we have a major problem relating to effective participation; and (2) we are not presently allowing the Congress to carry out its consultative function as outlined in Secretarial Order 2882.

It would be extremely useful if the United States Congress or appropriate committees of both Houses invited the Congress of Micronesia to send a delegation to accompany the High Commissioner at the time that he and administration officials testify on the Trust Territory budget. This would provide the Congress of Micronesia with an opportunity to participate more directly in the budgeting process without authorizing it to appropriate U.S. funds directly. It appears to us that the Congress of Micronesia would welcome such an invitation and act upon it, but that it is unlikely to seek such participation on its own.

## 2. The pay problem.

Secretarial Order 2882 provides that 1968 shall be the last year in which Micronesians may simultaneously serve in the Congress of Micronesia and in the Administration of the Trust Territory. Congressional pay, however, is relatively low. Members have found that they spend most of their pay on expenses incurred during the session. Most members of the Congress who now serve in the Administration will have to forsake their elective office at the time the separation of personnel becomes effective. A number of them, however, would be interested in continuing in the Congress provided they could earn a living serving in the Congress.

The Congress thus far has approached Trust Territory problems with a considerable measure of maturity and responsibility. Eliminating a large proportion of its present membership, as well as the source of that membership, will be disruptive to the operation of the Congress. Moreover it will mean that outside of the Marianas membership in the Congress will be largely limited to those of independent means. This will probably produce a more conservative body; one which is less responsive to broadly-felt public needs and less interested in spurring the economic development of the Territory.

One possible solution to this problem is to set the pay of Congressmen high enough so that it provides sufficient income for a member to support himself and his family and maintain his position. There are two possible approaches to setting the pay in this manner: (1) authorize the Congress to set its own pay; and (2) set a minimum pay in the Secretarial Order and then authorize the Congress to set a higher pay if it so desires. Legislative bodies are notoriously unable to raise the salaries of their members; therefore it may be advisable to establish an adequate floor in the Secretarial Order and then permit Congress to establish a higher salary if it so desires. The floor however should be sufficiently high to permit individuals to depend upon elective office for full-time employment and pay. The establishment of adequate pay for Congressmen should be accomplished in consultation with members of the Congress of Micronesia.

Full-time Congressmen would perform several valuable functions in Micronesia. They would serve as educators, acquainting people of their districts with major public issues and thus helping them to prepare for change. It would also permit a group of people outside of the administration to devote time and effort to policy determination. Thus, it would help to make the Micronesian society more pluralistic.

### 3. Technical assistance.

The Congress of Micronesia has established its own research bureau but its operations are minimal. The bureau is financed from revenues raised in the Trust Territory from taxes imposed by the Congress. The Congress does not, however, have access to personnel qualified to give its members assistance in formulating public policy, particularly as it relates to finance and land matters. It, therefore, must depend almost entirely on the Administration.

The Trust Territory is entering a period of rapid development and the Congress will be called upon to enact far reaching and complex new legislation affecting the Territory. It will need considerable assistance if its participation in these new developments is to be meaningful and useful. The Congress has to have access to its own staff assistants. (The Nathan Report has previously cited this same need.) These assistants will have to be technically qualified but they will also need to exercise great judiciousness in rendering advice. It is the prerogative of the Congress working in conjunction with the High Commissioner to make policy and not that of the staff assistants. But this problem can be worked out as long as the members of the Congress and those they retain to advise them are cognizant of it.

In conclusion, the Congress is potentially the most viable political institution in the Trust Territory. It represents the

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single indigenous institution common to all of Micronesia. It can have a major and valuable impact on the future of Micronesia and the destiny of its people. Because the Congress of Micronesia is such an important institution we believe that at this time the questions relating to participation in the budget process, full-time pay for members of the Congress, and technical services available to the Congress are critical and in need of examination and decision.

Tom Dinell

Byron Baker