

September 6, 1967

BLUE ENVELOPE

Mr. W. Neiman Crasley, Jr.
Assistant Commissioner, Public Affairs
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Neiman:

I hasten to acknowledge your letters of August 29, concerning S. R. No. 1 and S.J.R. No. 25, and to respond, rather preliminarily, to your request for my reaction to the latter. I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss the matter even within the Department, and not with other interested Departments or Hill staff people. I will undertake to do these things. But because it is likely that I will be out of the office for the next several days, I do want to offer some comments now. These are not, however, sufficiently thought-through to warrant your conveying them to Micronesian leaders, and thus I'm writing by Blue Envelope to you.

Regrettably, as to S.J.R. No. 25, my reaction is negative. I of course share fully your view that the Micronesians, as the people most affected by status considerations, ought to be fully informed and fully consulted as to their views. I realize, too, that I view this local development in relation to what has happened and what may happen at the Federal level, and that these considerations were not known, or at least not as well known in Saipan as in Washington, at the point the measure was being constructed. Nevertheless, I believe that S.J.R. No. 25, if implemented in the manner described in your letters, is --

1. Premature. We do hope and expect that the U. S. Congress will turn to Commission legislation early in the Second Session. My own guess is that the form it will probably take will include Micronesian members, but even if the Administration bill is enacted without change, we have already advised the Congress that the President would be empowered to appoint Micronesians among the Presidential members. (This is not to say that he would, for you know the Executive Branch is not as one on this question.) In any event, for the Micronesian Commission to commence its own consideration in January and to establish "the range of alternatives open" seems to me out of logical order. This is the role foreseen for the Federal commission, and I would fear that the Micronesian Commission might find alternatives which are not in fact realistically available. The Cook Island precedent is probably one.

2. Presumptuous. Not only does the Micronesian Commission seem to preempt the role foreseen for the Federal Commission, but I find troublesome its hope to hold Honolulu hearings in January. It is, I believe, a rare event for State legislatures to invite and hear Federal witnesses, and it would be rarer for a territorial legislature to do so (except in the case of Federal officers attached to their own governments). Perhaps I'm excessively nervous, but I would fear that U. S. Congressional people would react adversely to invitations to appear. Executive Branch people would have a hard time, as a practical matter, being suitably responsive, in light of the pendency of related Federal legislation on which positions have not entirely hardened. There is a lesser, but real problem, in who will pay the bill. I doubt that the Congress of Micronesia could afford the travel involved for witnesses, and would wonder whether Federal people except for those in this Office, (who would have no foreseeable difficulties regarding this as a public business) could justify charging their agencies. I'd think the same problem would arise in the case of witnesses from the territories and Puerto Rico.

3. Potentially counter productive. My greatest concern would be that identified above — that the Micronesian Commission might settle upon a course or courses which appear, on the basis of whatever information its members are able to assemble (and this could, of course, be either incomplete or misleading) to them to be most attractive. As we are both aware, these might be courses which the Federal establishment, and particularly the Congress, would find unacceptable. It is precisely this hazard that we have been hoping to avoid by having the initial decisions made by a group in which the Congress, as well as the concerned Executive agencies, and we may still hope, Micronesians, are all represented.

Perhaps, upon reflection, I will be able to feel more sanguine about this; and perhaps, upon informal quizzing, I will learn that other Federal people involved do not share my concerns. I hope this will prove to be true, for I realize we are confronted with a measure which has been enacted and which must be implemented. I am also aware that this development would probably not have occurred had we got the Administration proposal moving faster. As you know, we tried.

I will write further on this subject in the next week or so, possibly with a constructive suggestion.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
Director

cc: Bob Vaughan
Van Cleve:emw