

*CANCELLATION OF Lawyer Program*

**PEACE CORPS / MICRONESIA**

**TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS**

*Lawyers*

EYES ONLY

Headquarters  
P. O. Box 392  
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May 4, 1969

Mr. Russell Davis  
Regional Director/EAP  
Peace Corps  
Washington, D. C. 20525

Dear Russ:

I have had some time to reflect upon the decision to remove the lawyers from Micronesia VIII. I mentioned by phone I would elaborate on the implications this decision will have for us here. Such is the purpose of this letter.

The decision is considered inappropriate. The lawyers are not the target it is so easy to be deceived into making them. Their removal is no solution; in fact, such action could cause exactly the escalation or focus one sought to avoid. Our imagination could not come up with an idea better designed to create an issue, not just affecting the Peace Corps, but the Micronesian community, the TT in fact the entire U. S. presence. It is well understood that at present, Micronesia is an issue, interest is high, controversy exists, and Peace Corps is being drawn into it. It is tactically logical to lower our profile to better ensure continuation of our presence. It is logical to remove the lightning rod, which the lawyers obviously are, to Interior, Defense, Congress, etc. In an atmosphere of exaggeration and controversy, I can appreciate that the lawyer decision makes some sense; it can only alleviate concern at home.

While this decision may well alleviate concern at home, it will seriously compromise our presence here. I disagree with the decision but that is not the point; rather, I want to explain exactly what this decision means, and based on this, seek your further review of it.

The Peace Corps in Micronesia, has, of course, been in the unique position of working for and with two entities, the government and the people, made increasingly complex of late due to a widening gap between the two. Each has tried to have the Peace Corps take sides, tried to accuse the Peace Corps of having taken sides. We have made every effort to stay neutral, stay above

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it, work with both sides, and serve. I believe we have been quite successful and indeed see ourselves becoming a bridge. The lawyer decision, ostensibly brought on by anxiety or fear within the U. S. government which manifests itself as pressure on PC/W forces Peace Corps to make the choice. It identifies Peace Corps, when the chips are down with the government, and for political reasons, the worst of all reasons. It forces on us, a polarization, which is precisely what we have attempted to avoid, successfully up until now.

Peace Corps has attempted to work officially with the people too, as well as with the TT, from the beginning; thru the Congress of Micronesia and district level advisory council concept. One year ago this concept was in a shambles -- form without substance; disillusionment and disinterest were extant; a mere ratification or legitimizing of decisions already made by PC; a point of leverage to be used in the power plays with TT; anything and everything except a sincere effort to plan together and ensure that Peace Corps was responsive to needs and views of the people. In the past years, making this concept viable has been top priority. The Micronesian community has been elevated to an equal position with Peace Corps and TT in the program review process. We have listened, and said we would listen. We have gone after credibility in an environment that was skeptical. We have promised partnership and responsiveness in return for assumption of responsibility and participation. I believe that we have earned a measure of trust and respect during precisely the same period when all U. S. targets were fair game and Micronesian leaders were just looking for issues of unilateral action, bad faith, and unkept promises. As you know, the lawyers program approval had long since been announced in writing to all parties.

Our relationships with this legislative leadership are not perfect, and not existing in every district or with every leader the way we'd like to see them. Some are still skeptical and holding back. The lawyer decision will be received as a slap in the face, undermining those leaders who have agreed to plan closely with Peace Corps while giving the dissidents justification. While the growth in relationships cannot be denied, this decision will set us back.

What this really boils down to is the much talked about bi-nationalism concept. If bi-nationalism is a good direction for Peace Corps to follow, and every indication and spoken word supports and encourages this direction, it is crucial in Micronesia; crucial because the host government and the host people are different. We see our relationships with the leadership as cooperative, with the leaders taking as much responsibility as they are able and willing to. Our effort has been, and must continue to be, that Micronesians must help direct this program.

In Micronesia, this requires continuity and consistency, and strength to withstand outside political pressure. The lawyer decision may be necessary in light of stateside pressures, but it will put the lie to our presence and undermine our credibility.

One could not pick a more visible, well known PC activity than lawyers, in so far as Micronesian leadership is concerned. The lawyers are respected and valued to an inordinate degree because they represent an input, a service that is otherwise, under present conditions, virtually unavailable. At a time when many leaders are talking about throwing in the legislative towel because the U. S. views it more like student government than an equal entity with the executive and judiciary, removal of the lawyers will look like a calculated and purposeful sabotage.

Because Micronesians are uppity, and because PCVs are young and independent and sometimes outspoken, and because the lawyers are working in behalf of and at the request of the leadership, and are visible, U. S. officials in high places are worried. But I have real difficulty in fathoming how the U. S. government, with all its strength, power, and traditions, can take seriously the activities of a handful of 25 year old lawyers, which in our assessment of facts and performance are well thought of on the local scene. Even if their performance did not hold up, I still have difficulty in seeing any justification for the action taken for the reasons given.

The lawyers are being used as a target and this is just not borne out by the facts -- be they mine, the TT's, or the Micronesians'. And worse, the decision appears to use Peace Corps politically, making PC for the first time, an agent of official foreign policy. If indeed the stakes are this high, then (1) the true facts of PC's presence are not getting through or (2) Peace Corps, with its worldwide credibility to always be considered, should leave.

To conclude, these are the implications. There may be a matter of degree to them. I would urge reconsideration of the lawyer decision, on the merits per se, as brought out in the attached Fite memo. If, in the final analysis, the decision must remain as is, then the full impact as we now see it, will be on the record.

I view the decision as really unnecessary, at least insofar as field conditions are concerned. And I view it with alarm because it forces us to be political; it forces us to take sides which dispute our emotional identities with Micronesians we have successfully kept perspective about, and it allows us to be used. I am going to have to reflect some more on the impact this decision may

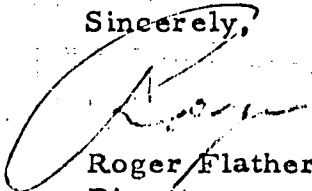
have on Volunteers, and how, if upheld, we are going to carry it out.

There is no doubt about the value of Peace Corps in Micronesia, more than elsewhere in the world. At present, there are no alternatives to PC in bringing educational and agricultural developments to the outer islands, and no practical, immediate alternatives for bringing to the Micronesian community, such professional services as legal advice. At all costs we want to protect this but dumping the lawyer decision in our laps does not do this at all.

I mean no disrespect or insubordination. If you think I'm mad, I am, but more, I'm agonized and distressed. You have the responsibility and authority to make decisions in the best interests of the Peace Corps, and without field input too, which is a risk I can only assume had to be taken. I said I'm on the team and despite my strong disagreement in this case, on that team I remain. However, this memo submits the data from the field which was not available before and which I hope will be sufficient for re-consideration. In any case, I must rely as always on your support and confidence, and I do so willingly. I can ask for no more than a review and I appreciate this.

As I read this over, I know you will see, as I do that the facts here indeed do speak for themselves, and strongly support a change in the lawyer decision.

Sincerely,



Roger Flather  
Director,  
PC/Micronesia

enc.

RF/pd

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