

# HICKEL DEPARTS FOR MICRONESIA

## Will Offer Trust Territory Larger Voice and Aid

By WILLIAM M. BLAIR

WASHINGTON, May 3.—Secretary of the Interior Walter H. Hickel leaves for Micronesia today in hopes of laying the Pacific Trust Territory closer to the United States.

He carried with him proposals for major economic help and stronger government for the vast Pacific Ocean area. The package offer is designed to gain a permanent association of the Trust Territory with the United States, which has administered the islands since 1947.

The package was worked out by the Nixon Administration in meetings between officials of the Interior Department and the State and Defense Departments. Mr. Hickel initiated the project as a means of further demonstrating both the Administration's and his own good faith toward minority groups. He has sought to do the same with American Indians and the Indians, Aleuts and Eskimos of Alaska.

Mr. Hickel is expected to lay the proposals before leaders of the Congress of Micronesia and district legislators during a three-day stay in Saipan. From there, talks will come legislative proposals to the United States press about the future status of the islands. Before leaving, Mr. Hickel consulted Congressional leaders to make certain that he was moving in the right direction.

**Limited Prospects**  
The Trust Territory is a poor area whose economic prospects and self-government are both limited. The Kennedy and Johnson Administrations sought to promote economic development but the effort fell short of needs.

The Trust Territory—2,141 small islands spread over 3 million miles in the western Pacific—came under United States jurisdiction through a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations. The population of more than 400,000 lives on about 100 islands with differing cultures. Japan was given a League of Nations mandate over the islands in 1922. They were the scene of bloody battles at Saipan, Eniwetok, Kwajalein and Iwojima between the United States and Japan during World War II.

When the United Nations designated Micronesia a "strategic trust," it gave the United States the right to establish military bases there. The Defense Department has been considering military bases in the territory because of demands for the reunification of Okinawa, a major American air base, with Japan.

**Hickel Cites Concern**  
Before departing, Secretary Hickel said that "our special concern is to give Micronesians a greater voice and representation in the administration of the islands."

The Micronesian legislature has almost no power, a situation the Nixon Administration believes must be corrected if the United States is to succeed in having the islanders associate more closely with the United States. Coupled with a stronger legislature would be an elected governor. The present governor, or high commissioner, is appointed by the President.

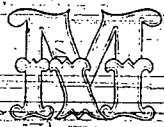
Accompanying Mr. Hickel is President Nixon's choice as high commissioner, Edward E. Johnston, a Honolulu insurance man. Mr. Johnston was acting governor of Hawaii when that territory became a state in 1959. He appears assured of winning Senate confirmation.

The terms of the 1947 trusteeship require that the United States "promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory toward self-government and independence as may be appropriate."

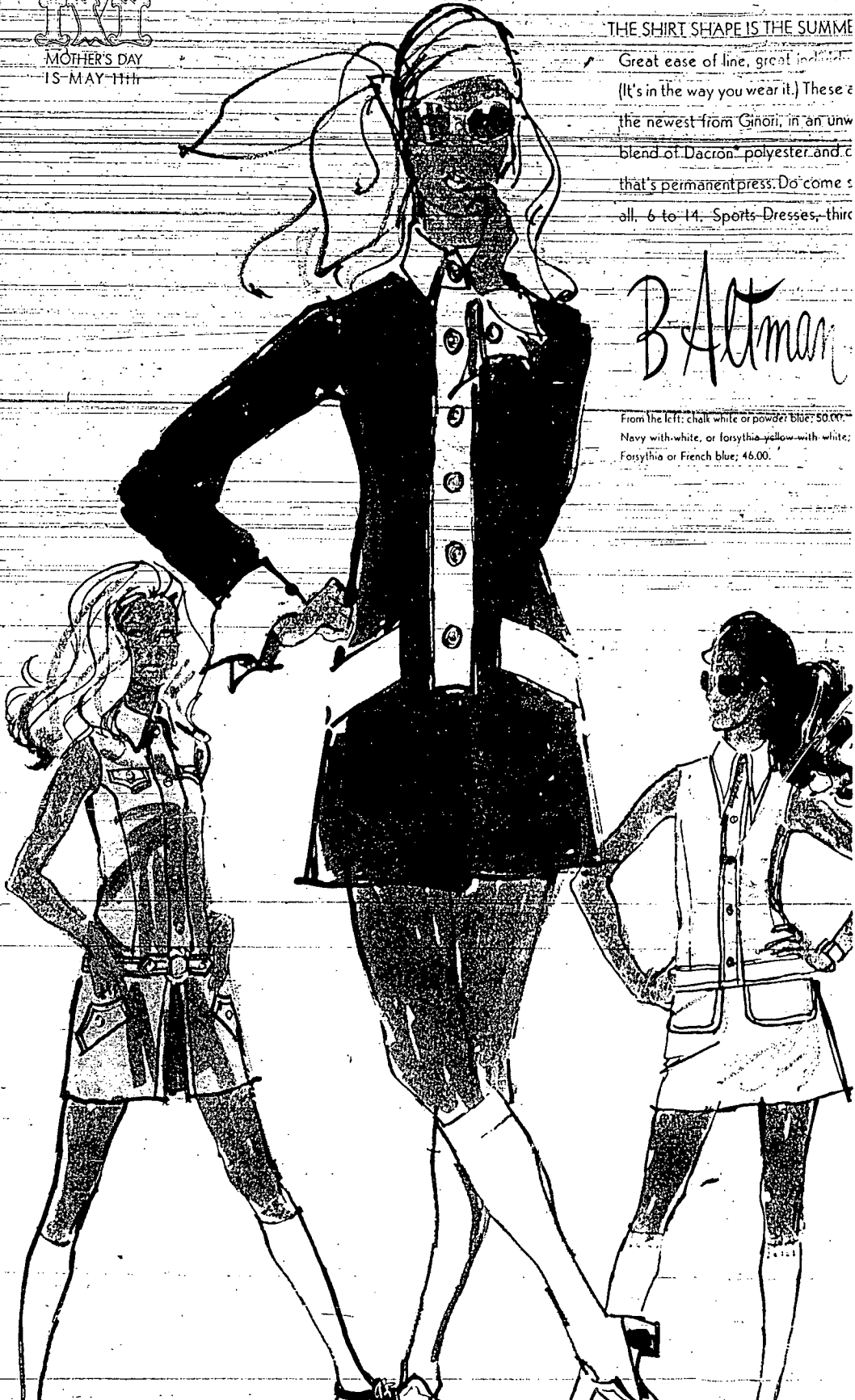
**Plebisite Scheduled**  
Mr. Hickel hopes to work out the outline of a new governmental plan for the Trust Territory with the Micronesian leaders, after which a plebisite will be held. The Nixon Administration would not offer a choice of whether the territory wanted independence or stronger self-government, but whether the Micronesians favored a new government.

The Administration does not consider annexation because this would be certain to cause difficulty in the United Nations.

Approval by the Micronesians of a new government as a plebisite would enable Washington to tell the United Nations that the people of the territory wished to keep their ties to the United States on a permanent basis and that no other plebisite would be necessary. A plebisite had been scheduled for 1952, but Mr. Hickel hopes to advance it by at least a year.



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