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# Memorandum

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TO : IO - Mr. De Palma

DATE: June 7, 1969

FROM : UNP - William H. Gleysteen *WJ*

SUBJECT: Micronesian Attitudes - Info Memo

TIP I - 2

Last Tuesday we entertained four visiting Micronesians at dinner: Leo Falcam, Special Assistant to the High Commissioner; Olympio Borja, Senator from the Marianas District; Chutomu Nimwes, Representative from the Truk District; and Kaleb Udui, Legislative Counsel to the Congress of Micronesia. Generally we found that they displayed an impressive degree of political sophistication as well as good will toward the U.S. Their high hopes for our policies toward Micronesia are, however, mixed with a healthy skepticism.

## Political Future

The question of Micronesia's future status occupied much of the conversation. Mr. Udui, who was the most talkative, stated that Secretary Hickel's remarks in Saipan had been very well received by the Micronesian leadership as well as the general public. He added that now they are waiting to see if anything comes from it. He mentioned incidentally that as soon as they received "intelligence" reports that Secretary Hickel would be making some sort of a major statement, arrangements were made with the Status Commission for an early release of a preliminary report in order to beat the Secretary's remarks. All of the gentlemen indicated that they expect the representatives sent in response to Secretary Hickel's invitation for discussions will be chosen primarily from the Status Commission.

The group indicated general agreement with the Status Commission's recommendation for "self-government in free association with the U.S." but did not exhibit any clear idea as to what this might involve. Udui argued that it meant full Micronesian control over internal affairs but "obviously we can't afford to establish chanceries all over the world." He thought that free association

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probably would mean U.S. diplomatic representation and protection, although at one point he indicated that Micronesia might be represented by a different country or several countries jointly. He retracted this in the face of our collectively raised eyebrows.

Senator Borja, on the other hand, indicated that most people had given little thought to what free association really means and that he, and probably a large number of Micronesians, would be willing to accept almost any fair offer.

To my comment that our Congress is not accustomed to thinking in terms of "free association" but rather in terms of degrees of self-government, Udui stated that the whole question would be the subject of much give and take and depend on the package of what we might offer. Micronesia had things that we wanted (presumably land for bases) and to a considerable extent it was a question of what we were willing to pay. He asserted that Puerto Rico would probably prefer independence if it weren't for the economic benefits received from association with the U.S.

Although we did not specifically ask, we had the impression that the Micronesians envisage a rather drawn-out time frame.

#### UN Considerations

Mr. Udui asked if -- in the event of independence for the Papua-New Guinea Trust Territory -- there might be a move to abolish the Trusteeship Council and transfer consideration of the TTPI to the Committee of 24. He also wondered about the UN attitude toward fragmentation of the Territory; whether the UN had ever promulgated standards on the question of status; and inquired as to the methods of handling petitions which were sent to the Secretary General.

We replied that we did not believe the Trusteeship Council would accept fragmentation prior to the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement. Moreover, we pointed out the difficulties which would

be involved in fragmentation even after such termination, emphasizing the question of economic viability of the various districts. The group seemed to appreciate these factors. Senator Borja felt that economic concessions would do much to alleviate agitation for fragmentation. He asserted that many people in the Marianas District who supported separation from the rest of the TTPI and reintegration with Guam did so as much on an economic basis (looking at the relative wealth and benefits available) as on any feelings of kinship with the Guamanians.

#### Miscellany

The group had some interesting comments on the question of political leadership in Micronesia, especially as concerns tribal elders. The latter defer to the former on national and international questions but exert much more authority on local issues. Even on the national and international issues, however, the younger leadership would not take action without consulting the elders.

One interesting example of the difficulties of getting the leadership to focus on the question of status concerned the visit of the Status Commission to Ponape to explain their deliberations and findings. The first question asked by the village chief was: "How much rice did you bring on the boat."

Outside of the political sphere, the group considered questions of transportation and communications, as well as the general question of land, to be of primary importance. They made the point that Micronesians have always felt very close to the land and that any attempts on the part of the state to take land are going to be met with strong opposition.

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