

TRUST TERRITORY

1969

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It was nine years ago, in the summer of 1960, that I first visited the sprawling islands of the Trust Territory. During my visit, I met with a high ranking government official to discuss the future development of the islands. In the course of our conversation, I suggested that we upgrade the educational program of the Territory and provide Micronesians with the opportunity to study at the University of Hawaii. I was surprised to hear his response that this was not necessary. I was told that the best way to deal with the Micronesians was to leave them alone. I was told not to upset the apple cart. As long as there was a lot of sunshine and the Micronesians continued to run around their islands half naked, things were all right. This high official of the Trust Territory appeared to view his role as a keeper of a zoo--a wildlife preserve.

This "zoo philosophy" of romanticizing the tropical paradise of Micronesia has, I am afraid, been the practicing philosophy of some of our officials in the Trust Territory. For the last 22 years, we have stifled efforts to develop Micronesia. We have failed to develop plans to fulfill our commitment to the Trust Territory and the United Nations.

However, I hasten to add that most of our officials in the Trust Territory have been extremely dedicated and conscientious in their work. They have not been clock-watching bureaucrats. I know they tried their best.

But they cannot be expected to perform miracles. I believe the real culprits are members of the United States Congress. And I do not exclude myself from that membership.

I also wish at this juncture to publicly commend our former High Commissioner, our own William Norwood, for his exceptional efforts. I am proud Hawaii provided as Commissioner a man able and willing to give such outstanding leadership.

Under a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations, we undertook the responsibility of promoting the political development of Micronesia towards either self-government or complete independence--whichever course the Micronesians chose to pursue. At the same time, we incurred the additional responsibility of developing the Territory's educational, social and economic system.

During the 22 years of our Administration of the Trust Territory, the 91,000 Micronesians who inhabit the 700 square miles of picturesque islands scattered over an ocean area the size of the United States have been all but forgotten. They have been taken for granted and at times sorely neglected. They have subsisted on a primitive economy and tolerated a totally inadequate school and public welfare system. They have even suffered the degradation of being uprooted from their homes on Bikini, Eniwetok, and Kwajalein to make way for the nuclear and rocket testing we held on these islands.

Micronesia has suffered at the hands of Congress because no one with political muscle in Washington has been interested or willing to make the cause of Micronesia his own. As a result, Micronesia has, every year, been given an extremely low priority for our interest, attention, and funds.

It is no exaggeration to say that our assistance to the Trust Territory has been pitifully deficient. The last 22 years have seen extremely limited progress in the development of roads, harbors, and water supplies--the very foundation upon which the economic expansion of the islands depends. The few roads which the Micronesians do have are in deplorable condition; many are, in fact, bomb cratered remnants of the pot-holed roads left by the Japanese during World War II.

Our record in the area of public health and education is equally distressing. Throughout Micronesia, there is a desperate need for electric power, water, and sewage disposal facilities. At present, less than 9,100 Micronesians, less than 10 per cent of the population, have a protected water supply. While sewage systems exist on some islands, there are no sanitary disposal systems on any island. Consequently, an extremely high number of Micronesians are drinking water contaminated by human waste and, as a result, suffering from parasitic worms, gastroenteric disease and amebic dysentery.

Our progress in developing adequate housing has been disgracefully slow. Communities of war scarred homes and quonset huts constructed of leftover corrugated iron from the Second World War still desecrate the beauty of the islands.

Our drive to expand the educational system in Micronesia has been stymied by a lack of both classrooms and teachers. Of those classrooms available, many are overcrowded. Others fall far below acceptable standards. Of those serving as teachers, few are fully qualified or credentialed. Forty per cent of all high school teachers have not graduated from high school; 30 per cent have only their high school diplomas.

The economy of the Trust Territory plods along on a subsistence level. The single statistic which shows that their second largest export today is scrap metal from World War II is a clear indication of the state of affairs in the Territory. I am sure you can now understand why visitors leave Micronesia with the distinct feeling that the inhabitants of the lovely islands are living in an age past--in and among the relics of the Second World War.

Admittedly, the development of Micronesia has been severely handicapped by the physical features of the Territory and the demographic characteristics of the population. The geographic dispersion of the inhabited islands necessitates the expensive duplication of facilities on each island. The small total land area makes land its scarcest and most precious resource. Its high birth rate increases the number to be fed and housed. And the large proportion of its population under twelve creates labor shortages and high education and welfare costs. These factors, without doubt, make development difficult. However, even the limited

potentials for development have been neglected. The agricultural potential of the islands has been ignored. Its marine resources remain untapped. Tourism has only recently begun to be developed.

Our extremely low appropriations for the Trust Territory have slowed development to a deadening pace. From 1952 to 1962, annual appropriations ranged from about \$4 million to \$6 million. During that ten-year period, we allocated fewer dollars to the 91,000 Micronesians living in the Territory than we spend daily in Vietnam. And as you may have surmised, a sizeable percentage of this small sum has been devoted to the salaries of the United States administrators for the Territory. Our annual appropriations allowed little for development--for public work projects, for education, and public health.

Recently, however, our military operations in Vietnam have focused attention on Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, increasing appropriations have been authorized for the Trust Territory. In 1963, Congress authorized a substantial increase in appropriations from \$6.5 million to \$15 million.

Most recently, we have been presented with the distinct possibility of having to close our military bases on Okinawa to appease Japanese protest over our military presence there. This has started a flurry of activity. We are frantically re-examining our defense posture in the Pacific and trying to locate alternate military sites. I have been told that the search for new bases has led high ranking military officers to seriously consider replacing our Okinawan bases with facilities in the Trust Territory.

At the same time that our search for alternate military bases has accelerated, and the attractiveness of the Trust Territory as a defense site has grown, we have received alarming reports that the Micronesians are thinking of leaving us. And so we find the frenzied activity--the 1,000 per cent increase in our appropriations for the Trust Territory from about \$4 million to approximately \$40 million and most recently, the political fence mending trip of our Secretary of the Interior, Walter Hickel.

Following his trip, Secretary Hickel sent a memorandum to our administrators in Micronesia asking for progress reports on proposals for "economically awakening" the Trust Territory. These proposals include dropping tariff barriers for Micronesia products, dropping certain travel restrictions to the United States, improving the judicial system, and developing a better revenue system. Secretary Hickel also requested plans for the orderly shift of U.S. administrators to advisory capacities in order to give the Micronesians greater responsibility for their government. These are, indeed, healthy signs.

I was especially delighted to note Secretary Hickel's memorandum regarding tariff barriers because it coincides with Senate Bill 2125 which I introduced on May 12 to exempt from tariffs and duties most goods entering the United States from the Trust Territory. I introduced this bill for the explicit purpose of assisting the Trust Territory to become more self-sufficient by raising their miserably low per capita income and by demonstrating to the people of these Islands our intent

to fulfill our obligations as a United Nations trustee.

The people of the Trust Territory know that their association with us need not be permanent. Three years ago, the Congress of Micronesia passed a resolution urging that this generation of Micronesians be given an early opportunity to determine the future constitutional and political status of the Trust Territory. To this end, former President Lyndon Johnson scheduled a plebiscite for 1972. This means that in three years Micronesians will decide their political status.

With this plebiscite in mind, I cosponsored, last year, Senate Joint Resolution 49 to establish a President's Commission on the Trust Territory which would recommend to our President and Congress the best means of permitting the people of the Trust Territory to freely determine the future status of the Trust Territory. The resolution passed in the Senate but unfortunately died in the House. It was with extreme disappointment that I learned of the action of the House on this resolution. I, for one, firmly believe that prior to the plebiscite the Micronesians must be provided with sufficient information on the alternatives open to them. The alternatives currently proposed for their consideration can be reduced to three: first, a continuation of the trusteeship agreement; second, a free association with the United States; and third, complete independence.

Further, I believe that the Micronesians should be informed, in sufficient detail, on the possible consequences of each alternative. If they vote for a free association with the United States, they need to know, for example, exactly what kind of association they can expect. Commonwealth? Territory? Statehood? A number of other principal questions should also be answered prior to the plebiscite. For example, will they become citizens or nationals of the United States? Will their fiscal posture be improved? Will they derive favorable tax and tariff treatment? What powers will be delegated to their legislature? What form will their legislative body take?

Let me emphasize that should the Micronesians decide to maintain their association with the United States, we must assure them that only with their complete consent will we locate our military bases on their islands. It is our responsibility to also guarantee the Micronesians against the imposition of military control over their islands. We can promise no less.

In the face of the defeat of the resolution to establish the President's Commission on the Trust Territory, it is heartening to know that the Congress of Micronesia has appointed six of its most able members to its own Status Commission. The Commission is responsible for exploring the various options open to the Trust Territory in the forthcoming plebiscite. To date, the Commission has neither released the results of its investigation nor its recommendations.

Early this year, however, six members of the Congress of Micronesia's Status Commission indicated, during their visit in Hawaii, a growing desire in the Trust Territory for complete independence from the United States. They reported that increasing numbers are adopting the slogan "Micronesia for Micronesians."

At the crux of this surge for independence is the feeling that Micronesia is simply a pawn in "U.S. pork barrel politics." As one Micronesian legislator said, no one cares what happens to Micronesia. According to their reports, the growing dissatisfaction with the present Trust Territory arrangement originates from their frustration with our Administration's sudden change of their High Commissioner and the years of past mistreatment.

I have also received reports that the Micronesians were recently told that the United States is paying a hundred million dollars annually for the lease of military bases in Spain. This has led the Micronesians to conclude that if they were an independent country, the United States would have to pay rental on her bases at Eniwetok and Kwajalein. The implication is, of course, that Micronesia could well afford independence on the hundred million dollars which it might receive from us for the lease of our military bases on the islands. That the Micronesians seem to feel it is easier to get money from Congress for defense needs than for Department of the Interior projects is a very sad commentary on our administration of the islands.

It is my firm belief that regardless of what they decide, the Micronesians should be treated as a free and independent people. We should make every effort to give our friends our sincere assurance that whatever their wish may be regarding their future political status, we will abide by it.

Recently, we have received suggestions that the Trust Territory be made part of Hawaii. As a result of our physical proximity and cultural similarities, there is a natural affinity between Hawaii and Micronesia. This affinity has, indeed, been fostered by both Hawaiians and Micronesians.

The influx of Micronesians into our educational institutions is only one example of our friendly association with the Trust Territory. Sixty-seven of our East-West Center grantees are from Micronesia. Their fields of study range from public nursing to meteorology, from architectural drafting to machine shorthand, from auto and air mechanics to library science. Six students from Micronesia are presently enrolled in degree programs at the University of Hawaii.

Economic bridge building has also been initiated between Hawaii and the Trust Territory. A recent publication by the State of Hawaii reported that 43 Hawaiian companies are already doing business in the Trust Territory. Perhaps, the most publicized of these business ventures is the association of one of our local airlines with Air Micronesia---the first airline to connect the major islands of the Territory with Hawaii. I might add that additional avenues of cooperation between Micronesia and Hawaii were opened during a recent seminar sponsored by our State in which six Micronesians met with our businessmen and government officials to discuss how Hawaii's business community can assist in the development of Micronesia.

The key to all of our deliberations lies with the Micronesians. It is imperative that all discussions begin with the principal question: What do the Micronesians want? Do they want to be completely independent? If so, we should exert all efforts to ensure that they achieve independence with all speed. Or do they want to maintain a free association with the United States? If so, what kind of association do they desire? Do they want to become part of Hawaii? If this is their wish, then we must also ask the people of Hawaii whether they want Micronesia. And we must ask Congress whether it will permit Micronesia to become a part of Hawaii.

There are many questions to be asked. And it is our responsibility to ensure that each is resolved by those people directly affected by the decisions made. We can do no less.