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Remarks made by Representative Benjamin Manglona of the Mariana Islands District on the Future Political Status of Micronesia, on July 29, 1970.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished colleagues:

Several days ago our Political Status Delegation formally submitted its final Report to this House. As a member of that Delegation, I am obliged to make a few remarks regarding the status issues now facing us.

Before I proceed to make my remarks, may I extend to each of you my appreciation for the honor and the opportunity of serving you as a member delegate to our Political Status Delegation and to represent this Congress during the discussions with members of the United States Delegation on the future political status of Micronesia. The opportunity of serving you on our Delegation has helped me to increase my understanding and to broaden my appreciation of the complex issues surrounding the status question.

As one of the representatives of the Marianas District, may I convey to the members of this House my full and unequivocal support of Micronesian unity. Foreign domination of our Micronesian islands has brought us together as a political unit, and to make a change in our current political status we must act as a unit.

It is of crucial importance that Micronesians must act in concert in any future discussions or negotiations on matters affecting a change in our political status. Your Delegation has exercised a magnificent act of total unity during the discussions it conducted with the United States Delegation. This experience of solidarity has given your Delegation a very powerful bargaining leverage and has earned us a new respect in our efforts of presenting the Micronesian position to the United States Delegation. I would hope that in the forthcoming days of heated and serious discussions on our continuing efforts to reach the most acceptable future political status for Micronesia, the members of this House would, in the final analysis, unanimously endorse a position that would be respected as the choice of the Congress and the people of Micronesia.

As the Report of your Delegation has indicated, there are presently three alternatives of political status available to the people of Micronesia. These statuses are: free association, independence and Commonwealth. I would like to suggest that irrespective of the names or designations of these statuses, our solemn duty and obligation as members of Congress is to take a position that fully protects the Micronesian interest. I fully support the four basic principles and legal rights enumerated by your Delegation as the basis for any future political status of Micronesia. These principles remind us of our rights to control our lands and our internal affairs, but by the same token, encourage us to seek the opportunity of receiving the continued friendship, financial assistance and security from the United States and preserve for our posterity the choice and power to control their destiny.

May I make it emphatically clear that I personally do not believe, and

my constituents support me in this position, that independence is a practical alternative for the people of Micronesia to pursue at this time. I am aware that independence, as your Delegation has pointed out, is the choice most in accord with the intent of the Trusteeship Agreement. It is also the choice made by all of the nine trust territories which have so far changed their statuses. However, we cannot overlook the realities of life in Micronesia. Our small population, the lack of certain natural resources, the immense geographical dispersion, cultural diversity, communication and transportation difficulties, and to a large degree, our acceptance of the American standard and practices would gravely challenge any Administration and would particularly test a newly-independent government. I believe that if, after further discussions with the United States and the United Nations, we find that the United States is still unable or unwilling to support a position which fully protects our Micronesian interest, we should not opt for outright independence, but we should continue to press for a status which is acceptable to both sides. I personally would be more inclined to meet further on the United States offer for Commonwealth status, than to endorse a drive for independence.

As a general recommendation, I think it would be healthy to continue further study and review of all the alternatives presented in your Delegation's Report. I am in support of defending the Micronesian position fully, but it would be remiss on our part to be so jealous of our position as to completely lose sight of the merits offered in the United States proposal. I believe the United States proposal does offer certain features that are attractive to many of our people and we should try to incorporate such features into our position. For instance, the majority of my constituents desire free access to the United States for any reason and access to the United States Federal Courts. Many express concern for a Micronesian delegate in the United States House of Representatives and for the increase of economic assistance and aid to Micronesia.

As we are concerned about a continued relationship with the United States, I think we should be aware of the practical limitations of the United States and to realize that it cannot operate outside the framework of its Federal constitution. To some degree we must accommodate the United States in order to reach an acceptable solution to our political future. I am aware that of the four principles and legal rights presented and defended by our Delegation, the fourth, which would recognize either party's right to end the relationship, caused the United States Delegation the greatest disquiet. I would like to suggest that perhaps we can modify this last principle to accommodate the United States. Instead of a unilateral right of either party to terminate the relationship at any time, we can work out a formula whereby our people would go to the poll every so many years to determine the political direction they would like to follow. Similar safeguards may be required to be imposed on the United States.

In closing, I would like to say that I strongly endorse the position of the Political Status Delegation that the final choice on the future political status of Micronesia should be made by the people themselves through a plebiscite and not by the United States or the Congress of Micronesia. I strongly urge that we in Congress must take certain courses of action this session to implement programs for the political education

of our people in order that the issues surrounding our future political status be fully reviewed, studied and understood. It is our duty to see that the Micronesian interest is fully protected, and that the people of Micronesia are presented with the best possible list of alternatives from which to choose; but the final decision on the future of Micronesia must be made by the people of Micronesia.

Thank you.