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'Tremendous Progress' Noted Johnston Takes Exception To Daily News Editorial

Editor's Note: The following was written by High Commissioner Edward Johnston, in rebuttal to a recent editorial calling attention to our failings in the Trust Territory. In the interest of fair play we are printing his statement in full.

The July 14 editorial in the Pacific Daily News, entitled "A Chance to See..." has given us yet another chance to see just how uninformed the editors of this newspaper are about their nearest neighbor, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. It is another deplorable collection of half-truths and misleading or totally erroneous statements.

It is fortunate that Ambassador Haydn Williams and Secretary Royston Hughes have not had to depend upon the Pacific Daily News for their information about the Trust Territory during their recent visits to our six districts. Instead, they have been able to obtain a balanced picture of both the good and the bad in Micronesia from visiting and talking with islanders from all walks of life. They would not have gotten such a balanced picture from this newspaper, but perhaps through this great editorial we can restore the balance a little.

Although I disagree profoundly with the way in which the Pacific Daily News reports on the Trust Territory, I am nevertheless grateful to the editors for this opportunity to respond to what I feel was a singularly unfortunate editorial.

As for languages, the Trust Territory bilingual studies program, combining a teaching of English as a second language with orthographic studies of ten major local languages is widely recognized as outstanding. Local histories are being written, folklore and legends are recorded, and there are countless other similar projects.

We are quite proud of the fact that our Community College of Micronesia, in Ponape, has just been granted correspondence status in accreditation from a national accrediting agency of the United States, a process that the University of Guam also went through in recent years. It is a big step forward for higher education in the Trust Territory, and certainly represents much more than just an attempt to "provide the Micronesians with a college or university of their own." In addition, a very warm liaison exists between our Department of Education and both the University of Guam & Guam Department of Education, with hundreds of Micronesian young people receiving both secondary and college education on Guam.

Communication in the Trust Territory is "better now," as the editorial graciously states, and it will continue to improve, as will transportation with an emphasis being placed not only on improved air transportation facilities, but also on ships, harbors and dock facilities. We have a growing fleet of inter island vessels that are providing more reliable and frequent service to all of the populated islands of Micronesia

now being utilized. We hope to add \$5 million to this program during the coming fiscal year.

To call economic development in the Trust Territory "a joke" is to ignore some basic facts for the sake of a flip phrase. The Trust Territory has reached a new high in export income, tourism is growing, a program of orderly, planned development is under way, and in such areas as fishing and agriculture new developments hold great promise.

We do face serious problems in this area, as Pacific Daily News itself acknowledged in a March 25 editorial this year, but to ignore the definite progress that is being made, and to suggest that we are not making any effort to build an economy that will sustain the people after the United States leaves, is just plain irresponsible journalism.

Being human, I am certain that we have from time to time failed the islanders "even in political activities," as the editorial suggested. Technically the Congress of Micronesia can override the High Commissioner's veto, but their action is then subject to concurrence or rejection by the Secretary of the Interior. As long as the U.S. Congress provides funding in the amount of \$60 million or more per year this condition will probably exist, at least until there is some change in Micronesia's political status. It is noteworthy to point out that only once in the six year history of the Congress of Micronesia has a bill gone to the Secretary of the Interior for

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...nevertheless grateful to the
...for this opportunity to
...to what I feel was a
...unfortunate editorial.

...as the editorial did,
...that the Trust Territory has
...suffered from 20 years of
...to repeat an already
...accepted point of
... But frankly, I believe far
...in the making and planning
...for the future than in dwelling
...in the past. In my opinion, one
...of the greatest reasons for
...studying history is to note,
...briefly, and then avoid, the
...mistakes of the past. I firmly
...believe that the situation in the
...Trust Territory today furnishes
...ample proof that the mistakes
...of the past are just that—in the
...past.

The area of education is an
...excellent case in point. Much
...material on and of Micronesia, is
...being used, is being developed,
...is being saved from the oblivion
...of discard in our Trust
...Territory schools today. For
...example, "Micronesian
...Backgrounds" by Alice Shorett
...is a Social Studies book
...developed in the Department of
...Education that is now used
...throughout the Trust Territory
...and at the University of Guam.
...A textbook on Micronesian
...history has just been completed
...by Fr. Francis X. Hezel of Truk
...in another project. A
...professionally developed set of
...films on all districts is available
...to all schools. Subject specialists
...in Math and the sciences are
...producing substantial materials
...designed specifically for
...Micronesian schools. And many
...educators on Guam and
...elsewhere are familiar with such
...outstanding materials as
..."Pathways to Micronesia," an
...annotated bibliography of
...materials, and "Pathways to
...Science in Micronesia," to cite
...just a few examples.

...reasons that are
...providing more reliable and
...frequent service to all of the
...populated islands of Micronesia.

...Some facts about health care
...in the Trust Territory might be
...instructive to the writer of the
...Daily News editorial. There are
...now more than 1,000 health
...services employees in the Trust
...Territory. We have one
...physician for every 2,000
...people, and five hospital beds
...for every 1,000. There are 35
...Micronesian physicians, with
...five more expected to complete
...their studies soon. In addition,
...14 American physicians, most
...of them specialists, augment
...this staff. Two new hospitals
...were completed last year, and
...four more are in the planning
...stage. And in the past three
...years we have completed
...construction of more than 80
...new dispensaries. A pilot mental
...health service has also begun,
...with five employees and an
...expanding program.

In the area of public works,
...we are making tremendous
...progress, not "falling further
...and further behind." The fiscal
...year which just closed found the
...Trust Territory with an all-time
...high in value of new
...construction projects of \$60
...million, to which will be added
...an additional \$20 million in FY
...1972. Currently, the major areas
...of construction are water, sewer
...and power projects, valued at
...nearly \$24 million; transportation
...and communication projects
...including docks, roads and
...airfields, valued at just over
...\$10.6 million; and education
...projects including new school
...facilities, valued at \$10.5
...million.

The housing situation
...continues to improve, with U.S.
...Federal low-cost housing funds

...that only once in the
...six-year history of the Congress
...of Micronesia has a bill gone to
...the Secretary of the Interior for
...a decision.

This same condition and
...rationale relates to the Congress
...of Micronesia having a "more
...direct say in appropriations."
...The Congress of Micronesia must
...review the Trust Territory
...budget and there is considerable
...input and review by
...Micronesians at the territorial
...and district levels. It is
...significant to note that the U.S.
...Congress has accepted during
...the past two fiscal years the
...budget proposed by the Trust
...Territory Executive and
...Legislative branches without
...making any substantial changes.
...Members of the Congress of
...Micronesia have appeared with
...representatives of the executive
...branch in support of these
...budgets.

I, too, feel that the people of
...Micronesia have made sure
...Ambassador Williams and
...Secretary Hughes know what is
...really happening in Micronesia. I
...am not so certain that people
...who must rely primarily on the
...Pacific Daily News for their
...information about the Trust
...Territory will be as lucky. Yours
...is the major daily newspaper in
...this part of the Pacific, but it
...has often failed to provide its
...readers with reliable
...information concerning the
...Trust Territory.

I do not like to engage in a
...running battle with the editors
...of any newspaper. But I like
...even less to see misinformation
...about the Trust Territory of the
...Pacific Islands published as fact.
...The people of Guam and the
...readers of the Pacific Daily
...News in Micronesia deserve
...better.

Indochina Daily