

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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Area Code 913, University 4-4103

The Honourable Franklin Haydn Williams
Ambassador, Office for Micronesian Status Negotiations
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ambassador Williams:

I appreciated very much the opportunity to meet with you last week and I thought some more about the comments you made concerning the difficulties of communication existing between the district centers, the district leaders, the Congress of Micronesia representatives - who reside more often than not in the district centers - and the Outer Island populations. Unfortunately, it is probably true that official visitors to the Trust Territory generally see only one of the two worlds of Micronesia that exist today -- that of the District Centers, transportation schedules, and other real or locally initiated problems prevent most visitors from even a glimpse of that other world -- that of the Outer Islands. Nevertheless, it is there that most Micronesians continue to live, at least for the time being, still, I suppose about 65% of the Territory's total population. There, again, at least to this moment, they continue to follow a more or less traditional existence in still widely scattered hamlets and villages, only a few of which now number more than two or three hundred inhabitants. Although, as you well know, there is an increasing concentration of population on relatively few of the major islands, this is happening as a generally unplanned internal migration. Today, it usually involves individuals who are drifting into the district centers for a variety of personal and economic reasons. But, nevertheless in cases like Palau, islands like Babelthuap and Pelilu remain important in terms of attitudes and opinions held by all Palauans.

The six district centers are something like funnels, and - inevitably, frequently unfortunately, like screens, in the dissemination of reports to the outer islands about events and issues of the world, national, and territorial importance. I have found that individuals in the district centers appear frequently to be less well informed on happenings outside the district, and they are usually vulnerable to rumors which perhaps innocently misinform or at times intentionally deceive. Even concerning those actions that place within the districts, for example in the district administration, district legislative proceedings, and Congress of Micronesia representation, the

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people at large are just not as knowledgeable as one might have reason to expect or wish them to be. Today, in places like Babelthuap the population of the villages are still far too frequently manipulated by a relatively small group of political leaders - or self appointed leaders such as the returned students from Guam, Hawaii, or the mainland.

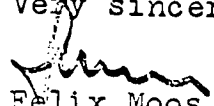
To this problem of communication is added that of district leadership. At the present time there exist, as you well are aware of, at least four different opinion-shaping groupings: 1) Members of the Congress of Micronesia, 2) District Administrators and their staffs, 3) Returned students and sympathetic Americans such as PCV, and 4) Traditional leaders such as magistrates, clan chiefs, and village elders. Although the more "modern leaders" do represent a powerful voice and influence - especially in the Congress of Micronesia it is probably still also true that the Micronesian, though he may answer to the call of Palauan, Yapese, or Trukese, sees himself more often than not as part of an extended family, clan, an island, village or community, a group that shares certain lands or titles or ceremonial wealth, or a constituency that gives support to and is served by a hereditary chieftain. The membership of such groupings is still relatively small, held together by ties of family and kinship, locality, reciprocity, age, sex, inheritance, and sometimes personal achievement - in education, business, or now more frequently politics.

In short the problems that we face in analyzing the decision-making factors in Micronesia today, and attitudes that Micronesians now hold are indeed many and varied.

I still continue to feel that in Palau, at least, the anti-American attitudes often described in the news media are not as deep nor as widespread than one might be led to believe. Such feelings do exist, but we should be very careful to ascertain who holds and disseminates these attitudes, and why?

In any event, I shall send Captain Crowe, some papers that I have written focusing on Micronesia, and I shall be very glad to help in your Office's efforts in any way I can. I hope that you will not hesitate to call on me.

Very sincerely,


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Professor and Director
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AIDE MEMOIRE
MICRONESIA

Oceania's 10,000 islands by 1972 feel the influence of fringing nations in varying degrees. Above the equator, U.S. strategic interests remain strong - and controversial. Below it, Australia and New Zealand are becoming increasingly economically active. Japan is making a very rapid extensive comeback. This is especially true for Micronesia where the Japanese economic influence on islands like Koror, Babelthup, Yap, and Saipan are becoming major factors in influencing the behavioral patterns of island populations. Yet, in many ways the tropical Pacific Islands themselves remain an entity worth noting in the world arena only because they are largely dependent and underdeveloped - they are the world's last emerging colonial area now gradually coming of age. By usual measures, the area is not large - about four million people for all Pacific Islands - about the number in Rio, and not much more than half of New York City. And yet, the land area of about 490,000 square miles is an area emotionally, strategically, and literally much bigger than the sum of its small parts. Certainly, the sheer size of Pacific Oceania gives it very definite strategic value. Then the Pacific holds a variety of scientific and technological test uses. Some are beneficial, some less so, i.e., weather and sea studies, ABM tests. But more important, if the world's oceans provide new underwater economic frontiers for food, oil, etc. the Pacific is the biggest of

them all. And already it seems certain that new kinds of international co-operation - OR COMPETITION are emerging or re-emerging. Aside from any unknown oil potential and some very important mineral deposits in the South-West Pacific, the islands are not rich. Nevertheless, for Japan, Australia and New Zealand and for some American business - they do represent a market. Tourism is just now emerging as a major factor, i.e., the spectacular growth on Guam (Ipao beach area etc.). Close behind it is a definite potential for future development, although not always readily apparent to all observers.

For the U.S. especially, the Pacific is important as a moral and strategic challenge. The immediate question in the Micronesian Status Talks involves reconciling these U.S. strategic self interests with the aspirations (changing and more complex as they are), and interests of the island populations. Micronesians and Americans alike, for example, have charged that the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is no more than "an artificial unit put together and held together by foreigners." And culturally, and to some extent politically, this is certainly true, i.e., the current moves in the Marianas. It should also be said, that in terms of current negotiations between the TT and the U.S. will also affect the U.S.'s and the TT's (or fragments thereof) future relations with Japan.

The Congress of Micronesia has been a primary force for unification in the years since its formal establishment in 1964 by a Department of the Interior Secretarial Order, and the "free association" concept is a product of the Congress' Future Political Status Commission. And although this sense of unity has suffered by the Marianas "intent to

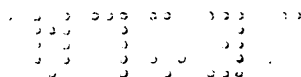


secede" resolution, the Congress does remain responsible for formulating many if not most "official" Micronesian political positions.

Perhaps, it could be suggested here, that in a way the U.S. has succeeded only too well in some political education projects - where she has not succeeded as well in economic developments. An emerging sense of being Micronesian and of belonging to a national entity can be observed in the present generation of young Micronesian college students. They increasingly tend to view themselves as citizens of a world community by reason of their common experiences, their frustrations about the present, and their hopes for the future. Students from Palau, Yap, Ponape or Pelilu, whether they get together in Guam, in Hawaii, or in San Francisco Bay area, generally present themselves as Micronesians. As this generation (often educated at the University of Hawaii) returns home, many if not most of them will find the district identity too confining, and will seek a closer association with their fellow students from other districts. The effects in this respect, of some of the PCV's efforts in the political arena are also not to be minimized.

Some of the shortcomings of American rule in Micronesia have been documented, since the basic Japanese economic structure was destroyed by WWII, but the real result has been very frequently, in the TT, for the past 20 years - stagnation.

The improvements of the American effort in Micronesia begun in the early 1960's. The Nixon administration has not only continued improvements but added new programmes and new interest. Such positive factors are worth stressing. But they must be judged against three



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factors - the basic economic situation in the various islands, the political development, and varying ramification in the six districts, and U.S. policy in the Western Pacific.

As stated earlier, Micronesia's political development has moved much faster than economic and social improvements. Thus, unfortunately for both, the Micronesians and the U.S., the virtual crash programs in the last eighteen months has put Micronesians in many top jobs. But such improvements have come in a time of increasing Micronesian concern over future political status, and thus, for example, big new U.S. appropriations are often suspiciously interpreted as a move to "buy" Micronesian dependence and permanent ties with the U.S.

The whole political question is complicated by the fact that today although much has been written on Micronesia, compared with practically nothing only some three or four years ago, really not very much is known about these islands or their inhabitants. In addition, some PCV's have recently become very active in portraying U.S. efforts in Micronesia as purely negative influences of yet another "colonial-imperialist" take-over of the area. Certainly, one has to be cognizant that the increasing concentration, and rapid culture change, in the relatively few major islands and the district centers, must be illustrated - must be understood - before we can undertake to develop the TT any further, politically or economically. One of the failures, perhaps, since too little was known about the TT, was the missed opportunity to join Guam and at least part of the TT long ago. Now it is too late, although the northern Marianas are certainly that part of the TT that most favours U.S. commonwealth status.

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But even if that should not happen right away, it seems very likely that future Micronesia, whatever, its new political status will have growing economic, and possibly later political, relations with Guam. So what the U.S. today faces in its dealings with Micronesia is a very real challenge between short - and long-range interests at a changing time that calls for new thinking and perhaps new political arrangements. What the U.S. does about Micronesia will say a great deal to the peoples of the Pacific - and to Japan. If we neglect our opportunities - strategic and other, we might well have to deal with a very real Japanese presence as we had to some thirty years ago. True enough, it seems logical to have a strong Japanese economic presence - and that is already the case - but this economic presence should be balanced by some U.S. presence in terms of a political arrangement taking into account minimal U.S. defense (strategic) requirements.

The mood about U.S. military intentions in the TT vary greatly from district to district and unfortunately too little is known to the U.S. public and the U.S. governmental agencies about the attitudes of the peoples in the villages especially in the outer islands. Most of what is said, or written about, or heard about on radio programs in the TT, represent the political opinions of the district center and of the political "sophisticate" - often trained in the U.S. nevertheless, a primary problem that does remain is that the attitudes of the outer island populations are frequently neglected by both the U.S. and the Congress of Micronesia. In order for any future arrangements

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between the U.S. and the TT to reflect the wishes of a majority of
Micronesians - rather than the will of a politically vocal minority -
we need to know a great deal more about the rapidly changing cultural
and social patterns - and aspirations, of these islanders.

