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ROCKS AHEAD IN MICRONESIA TALKS

The seventh round in the negotiations between Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status and the United States is expected to open in Washington in May.

The last round of talks, held in Hawaii, ended suddenly on October 6 when the United States refused to discuss the Micronesian's new request for the negotiations to include independence as a goal.

There is little indication of any change of attitude on anybody's part. The United States has maintained silence. The Micronesians seem to have become more bitter. Latest comment was contained in a release from the Congress office.

"What has brought the 'economic' question home to many Micronesians," the release said, "is their inability in the last four years to negotiate a political status of free association with the United States, an arrangement which most Micronesians felt to be more favourable to United States interests than their own. The Micronesian leaders are now realising that the United States is prepared and intends to stall the negotiations until the Micronesians make more concessions."

Another bone of contention chewed by the congress was the alleged refusal of the United States to allow the President of the Senate to serve as Deputy High Commissioner. A resolution demanding this was passed by the House of Representatives on February 13. It was proposed by Representative Olkeriil who declared, "The people of Micronesia will eventually get fed up with the United States if it continues to ignore our wishes and desires in the development of these islands . . . America must understand that colonialism and paternalism have no place in Micronesia today."

Another rock on which the talks might founder is separate status for the Marianas. The committee's attitude is hardening against separate negotiations as evidenced by a resolution in the senate by Salii which claimed that "the Congress of Micronesia, through the Joint Committee on Future Status, is the sole authority in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands which is legally authorised and empowered to conduct negotiations with regard to the future political status of the Trust Territory, including all parts thereof".

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