

# 'Not easy to determine what Micronesians people want'

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Ambassador to the Micronesian Status Negotiations said Thursday disagreement and confusion among Pacific Trust Territory residents is a puzzling barrier to determining their future relationship with this country.

"It is not easy to determine what the people of Micronesia really want," said Franklin Haydn Williams, President Nixon's emissary to the status talks, before the House Interior Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs. "There are wide differences of opinion on the future political status question within Micronesia."

Williams appeared to bring members up to date on talks dealing with the 2100 islands and their 115,000 residents. Under a 1947 law, this country administers the area as a United Nations trustee.

Some citizens want to maintain trusteeship status, Williams noted, while others prefer "close association" with the U.S. as a commonwealth, permanent association with the U.S., short-term affiliation, or even complete independence. At the moment, Williams said, no one has come up with an accurate way of measuring public opinion in the territory.

"This situation makes the talks more difficult both for the Micronesian delegation as well as ours," Williams said.

"I'm going to have to confess that from what I've been told, a very large segment of opinion in Micronesia doesn't know very much about the issue."

Proposals for straw votes and census surveys have not advanced very far, Williams said.

Members of the subcommittee suggested later that perhaps they might have to travel to the area themselves to get a better idea what the people want. "We may make an effort to join up with you for a day or so in the Marianas, even though it's a long and arduous trip out there," Chairman Philip Burton, D-Calif., told Williams, who agreed that such "visits in the past have been very useful."

Rep. Patsy T. Mink, D-Hawaii, praised Williams for his progress in the negotiations. "Instead of being far from completion of your work, indeed you are now extremely close," she said.

Rep. Jonathan Bingham, D-N.Y., a former UN Trusteeship Council member, told Williams he was "impressed, but not as optimistic as Mrs. Mink sounded. I think we're in pretty deep difficulty" with respect to getting UN approval of the negotiation results. Bingham said this was especially true, in his opinion, of efforts by the Marianas to make their own deal with the U.S., apart from the other islands.

Rep. Antonio Won Pat of Guam said the people of the Marianas are "confused" about American policies and are "becoming alienated from our American way of life" because of the "military impact on the natives, and then the civilian government workers, the Peace Corps and all kinds of people representing the United States . . . I can understand why the people are confused."

# Anti-Independence Voice Heard

By Harriet Diaz  
Daily News Staff Writer

Many questions arise in examining the problems of establishing a future

political status for Micronesia. One such question is whether the elected leaders, the senators of the Congress of Micronesia, are representing

the wishes of the people.

One man who believes they are seeking their own interests is Nick Bossy of Truk; who works in the government personnel department and serves as president of Truk's Anti-Independence Group.

The organization, which has the support of 98 per cent of Truk's 30,000 population, according to Bossy, was formed in 1970. Truk is the most heavily populated of Micronesia's six districts.

"When our Congress of Micronesia delegation publicly announced they were for independence, the group was formed to counterattack their move," said Bossy.

"We've been disappointed in our government for not educating us politically. It's very important that we stop this independence movement until the Trukese people understand the advantages and disadvantages of the other possibilities open to us—free association and commonwealth."

Bossy termed the independence movement in Truk "not very strong," though Truk's COM delegation has declared it the wish of the people.

"I feel this independence movement is an influence coming from outside Micronesia," said Bossy, "though I don't know what anyone would gain from



NICK BOSSY of TRUK

seeing us become independent.

"I don't know why Micronesians are saying 'Yankee go home,' we need the Americans," said Bossy. "While everyone who supports our group doesn't agree on which way we should go, they support us because they want some kind of an arrangement with the U.S. We don't want to break away from the U.S."

The older Trukese people, in particular, are skeptical about running their own government, he reported.

"Our main concern," said Bossy, "is that we retain control of our land." It was pointed out that the U.S. was not interested in Trukese land, but property in the Marshalls, the Marianas and Palau, and Bossy was asked if he felt that the people of these districts had as much right to control of their land as the Trukese, and whether he felt the independence movement was justified if this was felt to be the only way to retain control.

Bossy replied: "Maybe we should be negotiating among ourselves as to whether we stick together. There was an indication at the Ponape (COM) session that the districts are not willing to sacrifice for each other.

"I would like to see Micronesia stay together, including the Marianas," said Bossy, "although I am sympathetic to their people. I don't think they should break away. I think they should force the congress to reconsider the commonwealth status."

When asked what bargaining power Truk would have if Palau and the Marshalls decided to seek separate status, Bossy answered:

"None, but there is nothing to indicate that the U.S. would abandon us. They are obligated by the U.N. trusteeship agreement to help us. I think one of the main reasons that the Free Association Pact was rejected was that financial arrangements were not spelled out.

"People don't understand what the alternatives are to our status now. Our group has been describing them in this way: We are about to take a journey over a muddy road filled with holes. Let's take the situation as a father and son. With independence, at the start of the journey, the son tells the father to leave him to learn on his own, not to help him at all. If the son falls into a hole, he cannot ask the father for help in getting out," said Bossy.

"With free association, the father and son would journey on the road hand in hand. The father would teach the son how to overcome obstacles as they come to them. They will sooner or later come to a point where they will sit down and talk about what the son has learned, and the son will decide he has learned enough to continue the journey alone - so the father will remain where he is.

"The commonwealth, as I understand it, would be for the father and son to travel along the road indefinitely," said Bossy.

"Some people say a commonwealth cannot become independent, but look at the Philippines," Bossy said.

"We are being taken care of by the U.S., and I think we are lucky," said Bossy. "If the U.S. leaves now, and Russia or another nation comes in, how could we chase them out?"

"I don't buy the idea of the Japanese coming back. There would be too much readjustment necessary. We'd have to go to Japanese schools and learn to read and write Japanese. My sons were educated in American schools."

When I talked to Ambassador Williams (Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the U.S. ambassador to the Micronesian status negotiations), he told me the U.S. would go where they're wanted, that they wouldn't force themselves upon us if we say 'get out'," said Bossy.

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**Editorial**

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## End Not Yet In Sight...

We're inclined to disagree with Rep. Patsy T. Mink, D-Hawaii, who concluded a session on Status Talks for Micronesia, before the House Interior Subcommittee, with some praise for Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams. She said "Instead of being far from completion of your work, indeed you are now extremely close."

Unfortunately, Mrs. Mink was ill during the last subcommittee visit to the Trust Territory, or she would have found that she didn't exactly hit the nail on the head with her remark.

From all we have been able to gather, from Ambassador Williams' remarks to the committee, to the Status Talks themselves, to the ramblings of the Congress of Micronesia, to others we've talked to during the past years, the completion of Williams' work is not "extremely close" at all. We're sure that she just used the expression naively, as an expression of interest to Williams. But the facts show quite otherwise. Frankly, after watching the Micronesian scene for many years, we can't see any clear trend developing. We are inclined to agree more with Williams, who said: "It is not easy to determine what the people of Micronesia really want." He noted that "There are wide differences of opinion on the future political status question within Micronesia." And that's the truth.

The range of opinions on what is next for Micronesia is from the wild-eyed student demonstrators, many from Palau, who insist that Micronesia should be completely independent, and refuse to consider military bases for their islands to a moderate such as Nick Bossy, of Truk, a leader of the anti-independence movement who was interviewed recently by the Daily News.

Bossy said that 98 per cent of Truk's 30,000 people reject the idea of complete independence. He questioned whether the elected leaders of the Congress of Micronesia are really representing the people. But both Bossy and Ambassador Williams had one point in common. He said: "We've been disappointed in our government for not educating us politically. It's very important that we stop this independence movement until the Trukese people understand the advantages and disadvantages of the other possibilities open to us—free association and commonwealth." Bossy termed the independence movement in Truk "not very strong" although Truk's COM delegation has declared it the wish of the people.

Not only are the various options open to the Micronesian people going to present some serious problems before they're resolved, but even the means of making the people understand those options are going to be difficult. Williams noted that no one has come up with an accurate way of measuring public opinion in the territory. "I'm going to have to confess that from what I've been told, a very large segment of opinion in Micronesia doesn't know very much about the issue." There haven't been any straw votes, or surveys taken on the matter. Nor is there any plans for any that we know about.

While we respect Congressman Philip Burton, who suggested that the subcommittee make another trip to Micronesia to try to ascertain the views of the people, we can only caution him on this. We've been making trips to the islands for seven years, and we still are having difficulties trying to determine how the majority feels. Generally, we do know what the leaders think, because they are articulate, and in a position to be heard.

Micronesians are confused for a variety of reasons. First, there is so many factors involved in any kind of decision. There is the Congress of Micronesia, the Status Commission, the American administration, the U.S. Congress, the military, the Department of State, the United Nations, the Peace Corps, the Marianas separationist movement, and even Guam, and other neighboring countries to consider.

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Secondly, because of language barriers, and because of the tremendous distances involved, and the lack of good communications in the islands, just getting the message to the people is a challenge. Some of the outer islands, for instance, may only see a field ship a couple of times a year. They don't have radios in all areas, and certainly not TV, or daily newspapers. Even if they had the newspapers, they probably wouldn't be able to read them in the remote areas.

We feel that perhaps the Status Commission is going at this thing in the wrong way. Rather than have the Commission solely responsible for making "a deal" of some kind with the United States, we think that it might be better if they worked out a series of options to present to the people.

In other words, we feel that the Status Commission should spend the next year or so examining all possible forms of governmental status for the future. They should explore Status Quo, Free Association, Commonwealth, Territorial Status, and of course, Independence. Perhaps they might always want to consider some sort of alignment with another country, say Japan. After the options are listed, A,B,C,D, etc. then material can be prepared on each possible choice, to explain the various programs to the people. Teams could be formed and sent to each of the islands for personal contacts with all of the people. Seminars could be held. Such informational programs would probably take a year or two to get to all of the people. Then, and only then, would the people be sampled for their opinions and desires, either through a full fledged vote, supervised by the U.N., or through some type of survey.

We're not picking on, or downgrading the Status Commission in any way. They have demonstrated their ability in the past years, and have acted intelligently in trying to pursue some very difficult negotiations with the United States. It just seems to us, though, that judging from the obvious differences of opinion, it might be better to gather information about different choices of government, present this information to the people of Micronesia, and allow them to make their own choice. JCM.

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ROBERT E. UDICK Publisher

JOSEPH C. MURPHY Editor

JOHN WALTER Managing Editor

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# Doubt Is Heard On TT Status

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WASHINGTON — The question of the Mariana Islands going separate ways from the rest of the Trust Territory looms as a major problem in the continuing TT status talks, a Congressional subcommittee was told here.

Rep. Jonathan B. Bingham, a New York Democrat and former U.S. representative to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, warned "it is going to be difficult to sell" the council on approving separate status for the Marianas.

"I think we're in pretty deep difficulty" of getting U.N. approval of negotiation results especially if the Marianas made their own deal with the U.S., Bingham said.

His remarks came at a hearing of the House Territories Subcommittee in which President Nixon's hand-picked ambassador to the TT status talks also sounded pessimistic notes about their progress.

The ambassador, Franklin Haydn Williams, testified that disagreement and confusion among TT residents in general is a puzzling barrier to determining their future relationship.

"It is not easy to determine what the people of Micronesia really want," Williams said. "There are wide differences of opinion on the future political status questions within Micronesia."

He added: "I'm going to have to confess that from what I've been told a very large segment of opinion in Micronesia doesn't know very much about the issue." The hearing was held to inform committee members of the talks between Williams and TT representatives. Williams has separate negotiations set to begin with the Marianas this spring.

Delegate Antonio B. Won Pat of Guam, a subcommittee member, said that the people of the Marianas are "confused" about American policies and are "becoming alienated from our American way of life" because of the "military impact on the natives, and then the civilian government workers, the Peace Corps and all kinds of people representing the United States...I can understand why the people are confused."

When the Marianas voted once before to join Guam and Guam voters rejected that in a plebiscite, Won Pat noted, "only one-third of those registered to vote in Guam voted...I am sure that if a referendum were instituted today the people of Guam would be in favor of it."

And Rep. Robert Kastenmeier, D-Wisconsin, asked Williams about the military factor in the status talks and how it figured.

Williams said he believes that "the press and others have tended to exaggerate and make incorrect statements about our military presence."

He said that on four of the five major island groupings in the TT there is no U.S. military property and that the military had returned some 21,000 acres to the civilian populace in Micronesia in recent years.

But he also again outlined what options the U.S. seeks for military land and sea areas when — and if — the TT goes to a "free association" status: Continued activities at Kwajalein Missile Range, Bikini and Eniwetok atolls; and acquisition or rights at Malakal Harbor and Bebelthau Island in Palau.

Rep. Patsy T. Mink, D-Hawaii, sounded an optimistic note in the hearing, praising Williams for his work and saying, "Instead of being far from completion of your work, indeed are now extremely close."

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