

Anti-Independence Voice Heard

By Harriet Diaz
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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.