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# Morton Says He Plans Steps To Ease Micronesia Problem

By WILLIAM M. BLAIR  
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WASHINGTON, March 11—Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. E. Morton told Congress today that the United States had "dragged its feet" in relations with Micronesia and that he intended to take "new initiatives" to resolve differences with the sprawling Pacific Territory.

Micronesia is made up of more than 1,000 tiny islands and atolls and is inhabited by about 100,000 people. The territory was taken from Japan in World War II and is officially a United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United States through the Interior Department.

Reflecting concern over deteriorating relations between the United States and Micronesia, Mr. Morton said that he hoped to develop a "consortium within the Government" that was not dominated by the Departments of Interior, Defense and State, he told the House Interior Committee. "It seems to be a problem we can't get a handle on."

He said he hoped to meet with territorial leaders and get an agreement that would settle the future political status of the strategic area and to step up economic development of the islands. Conflicts among the three departments over the future of Micronesia have risen in the past and had to be settled by the White House.

He also indicated that he wished to bring Congress closer to the problem of Micronesia. The Micronesians have rejected a United States offer of commonwealth status, and the Unit-

ed States has turned down a self-governing "free association" with the Federal Government. The Departments of Interior, State and Defense have also rejected independence as an alternative.

## Plans Outlined

The question of Micronesia arose several times as the Secretary was questioned by committee members after outlining his plans for reorganization of the Interior Department to make it more "dynamic," upgrade its personnel and make it more responsive to the public interest. It was his first appearance before the committee on which he served for six years as a Representative from Maryland.

He indicated later in his first news conference as Secretary that there would be personnel changes in various areas and some promotions. He told newsmen that he intended to pay "a great deal of attention to personnel" and to "recruit young people."

He also told the House committee that he planned to ask Congress to create the post of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, a move that also would take in the Office of Territories, which deals with Micronesia.

In less than 10 days, he said, he will send to Congress the Administration's bill to settle the land claims of Alaskan na-

tives. This will be done, he said, after further review with Vice President Agnew and the White House staff.

He declined to go into details of the Administration bill, saying, "if we get into details we'll be here until the cow gives beer."

The land claims of the Alaskan natives, Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts must be settled before any decision is made on the controversial pipeline proposed to run from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez to gain the rich northern oil reserves in Alaska, he said at his news conference. All public land in Alaska has been "frozen" pending disposition of the native claims in both land and money.

Furthermore, Mr. Morton said, oil companies should explore all possible means of getting the oil out of the Northern Slope of Alaska, including a route through Northern Canada. Some informal talks have already taken place between Canadian and United States officials, and Interior sources said today that formal talks were expected to begin soon. He reiterated that other alternatives should be explored, including tankers, with emphasis on protecting the environment, land or water.

He told the House Committee that another of his goals was to develop a "wild project of sufficient scope" to tap the oil-rich shale lands in Western Mountain States. He gave oil shale a "high priority" but the problem of efficient production of the oil from the shale remained.

1 finally getting back at the gentleman for the Geothermal Steam  
 2 Resource Act of 1970. Now you will be called upon to administer  
 3 that Act. I just want to say we are all aware of that dream no  
 4 small dreams, make no little plans group within the bounds of  
 5 your Department. I do hope that you will in the administration  
 6 of this Act, we may see a real simplified procedure whereby  
 7 people can be issued releases and the Government achieve revenue

8 To you, sir, my best wishes and condolences as at times  
 9 may be deemed to be appropriate.

10 The Chairman. Thank you very much.

11 The gentlewoman from Hawaii.

12 Mrs. Mink. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 I, too, want to join in welcoming you to the Committee.  
 14 With your distinguished service on this Committee, I am sure  
 15 all the wide variety of problems that have been presented to  
 16 you this morning will have very careful consideration by your-  
 17 self and the Department. As you are aware, my continuing  
 18 interest on this Committee has been with regard to our policies  
 19 in the Micronesia area. My great concern continues and perhaps  
 20 increases with the delay in being able to formulate a policy  
 21 which is acceptable to the people of the Trust Territory with  
 22 respect to their status, their association with the U. S.

23 I am reminded of a speech your predecessor made two years  
 24 ago on his taking office, a speech of nine points in which he  
 25 elaborated the program his Department anticipated for the

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1 Trust Territory. I wonder if you are able to comment this  
2 morning on three points:

3 (1) The progress that the Department has made with  
4 respect to these nine areas of interest;

5 (2) Whether you anticipate making any changes or new pro  
6 posal or new initiatives with respect to the Trust Territory;

7 (3) Whether there will be new efforts made to try to  
8 arrive at some satisfactory arrangement with respect to the  
9 status of the Trust Territory?

10 Secretary Morton. Let me deal with the second two and  
11 ask Secretary Loesch to address himself to the first point, the  
12 point of the progress made on the nine points, because I am not  
13 familiar with the speech.

14 As you know, Mrs. Mink, we have dragged our feet in this  
15 whole area of the development of the relationship between the  
16 Trust Territory and the U. S. and the people of the U. S. We  
17 have done a pretty good job, I think, in the application of  
18 funds and in the execution of the development of an infrastruc-  
19 ture, including education, health facilities, some economic  
20 development, which has not gone as well as I had hoped it would  
21 go. As you know, I was very much interested in this area.

22 The new initiatives that we are doing are really quite,  
23 mundane and very much in-house. I am trying to get an agree-  
24 ment of understanding between the Departments of government that  
25 are involved out there, hoping that from this agreement, we can

1 really take some firm leadership in the development and encour-  
2 agement of the development of a status for the Micronesian  
3 people.

4 One of the problems, you know, is the different attitudes  
5 of the people in the different districts of Micronesia. It  
6 seems to be a problem that we can never get a handle on, we can  
7 never get started on. I feel that the area that I want to spend  
8 some time in is the area of developing a consortium within the  
9 government itself that will lead to an American policy for  
10 Micronesia that is not dominated either by the Department of  
11 the Interior or the Department of Defense or the Department of  
12 State. This is the primary initiative that I am now addressing  
13 myself to.

14 I think the encouragement that the Micronesian congress  
15 has had in trying to address themselves to this problem has been  
16 good. But again, I would like to meet with some of the congress-  
17 sional leaders of the Micronesian Congress and more of the  
18 Micronesian people to update myself on how they really do feel  
19 and how they would like to proceed with the status question.  
20 So I am at the beginning of that.

21 If Mr. Loesch would, I would be very happy if he would  
22 address your first point on what progress he has made on the  
23 nine points.

24 Mr. Loesch. Thank you, Mr. Secretary and Mr. Chairman.

25 Mrs. Mink, the speech you are speaking of addressed itself