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High Commissioner

Director, Public Affairs

Discussion with Ambassador Viktor Issraelyan re political education

This is a report of our (Raymond Ulochong and Strik Yoma) meeting on March 5, 1973, with Ambassador Issraelyan of the 1973 United Nations Visiting Mission concerning political education in Micronesia.

The discussion was very informal and was conducted with extreme candor and openmindedness.

Ambassador Issraelyan opened the discussion by outlining his observations of the situation in the various districts. He was basically disappointed in what he saw and he concluded his remarks by asking us what our thoughts were and what we plan to do to resolve the problems he had noted.

AMBASSADOR ISSRAELYAN'S REMARKS

In general, Ambassador Issraelyan's comments are pertinent and I would imagine that any outsider coming to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands with the purpose of pointing out to us the areas requiring our immediate attention would probably comment along the same lines.

For instance, the Ambassador expressed deep concern for the lack of a political education program and the fact that the present budget for political education is hopelessly inadequate. He stated that in all the districts he had visited he noticed immediately during conversation with the people that there existed a general lack of understanding of what is going on within and without the Trust Territory, especially in the area of political affairs. He stated that while he doesn't think it is necessary for every adult member of the community to be thoroughly familiar with most of the terms and concepts noted in the various reports of the Congress of Micronesia and the proceedings of the political status negotiations between the U.S. and Micronesia, he does feel quite strongly that members of the communities such as municipal officials and school teachers, etc., should have some familiarity with the major issues involved. He noted that

this lack of understanding clearly evidenced the absence of a political education program and the need for one to begin right now.

The Ambassador also expressed his dissatisfaction with our use of the broadcasting facilities and further stated that a great deal of political education can be accomplished through the use of broadcasting facilities and wondered why this is not being done. He noted that while he has been made aware of the existence of an administrative policy known as "decentralization", he doesn't think that should be an excuse for the present state of affairs. He stated that in most of the broadcasting stations he observed, the programming included too much musical entertainment but too little or nothing at all in the way of political education. In this connection, the Ambassador further hinted that this situation is especially noteworthy in view of the current political status negotiations and the fact that the Trust Territory is rapidly approaching the termination of its trusteeship status. The Ambassador then asked what the budget has been for broadcasting. To this question, we explained that approximately \$150,000 per annum is spent for the six district stations less Headquarters. (We will need to go back to the Ambassador on this point, as I feel that we did not give him the full picture of the budgetary situation.)

Another observation the Ambassador made pertains to the excessive time devoted to musical entertainment which is foreign to Micronesia. He made the observation that this type of programming can only lead to further cultural impoverishment and eventually a faceless Micronesia that is badly in need of identity.

Finally, the Ambassador made the statement that the absence of an acceptable level of general education on the part of our teachers is evidenced by the response he received from a secondary teacher when asked about the situation in the Middle East. The Ambassador stated that the teacher has no idea whatsoever about the recent events in the Middle East and he felt that secondary teachers should definitely have some ideas about major world events such as are occurring in that part of the world (Middle East) at this time.

RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR ISSRAELYAN, 1973 UNVM

Although we did not dispute Ambassador Issraelyan's observations and our responses were basically in the affirmative, we did try to clarify a few points which we felt were particularly pertinent.

(1) With respect to his observation concerning the lack of a systematic political education program in Micronesia, we explained that

the lack of a systematic program in this area stems from the absence of policy and program guidelines from the proper authorities. Neither the Congress of Micronesia nor the Administering Authority came forward with a specific program guideline. The result was that political education activities in the past years have been confined to (a) dissemination of information concerning major issues involved in the political status talks through NWS; (b) translation of the reports of the status talks; (c) dissemination of the proceedings of the status talks and (d) providing financial assistance to the districts for magistrates' conferences and district legislative workshops for the purpose of discussing political status matters.

We further explained that the Congress of Micronesia enacted PL 4C-96 creating a Political Education Commission. We were hopeful that this Commission, when constituted and functioning, would provide the necessary policy guidelines either through its own action or through additional legislation by the Congress of Micronesia upon the Commission's recommendation. We were quite optimistic in our thoughts concerning the work of the Commission and we implied to Ambassador Issraelyan that a great deal would happen in the area of political education as soon as the Commission began to function. At the request of the Ambassador, PL 4C-96 was duplicated and given to him just before he departed Saipan for New York.

In reviewing the activities of the Congress of Micronesia during the recent session, we found that what we had said to Ambassador Issraelyan regarding the Political Education Commission would not take place. The Commission did not organize and because the Commission was never officially constituted, it died a natural death at the conclusion of the recent session of the Congress. Whether or not we will need to communicate immediately with Ambassador Issraelyan to correct the information given him regarding the Political Education Commission is a matter we might consider prior to the completion of the writing of the report of the 1973 UNVM. My recommendation here would be that we don't bother about it now. The reason here is that we have sufficient proof from his remarks that as long as he had the responsibility to write the section of the UNVM report on political education in Micronesia, we cannot expect anything better than what he had stated in his remarks.

(2) With regard to the Ambassador's observation that much more political education can be done through the use of our broadcasting facilities, we responded by acknowledging the fact that we had tried to do this in the past and we encountered criticisms from both the Micronesian and the U.S. sides of the negotiation. We explained that

the Congress of Micronesia took the position that as long as the Executive Branch is under the control of the High Commissioner, interpretive explanation of issues cannot be objectively presented and Executive Branch employees responsible for producing these materials were accused of slanting the write-up in favor of the Administering Authority. We also pointed out that Micronesians in the Executive Branch are suspect by the Congress of Micronesia. With respect to the criticism from the U.S. side, we explained that from time to time we run into difficulty with the U.S. representatives to the status talks with respect to what they consider to be fair and balanced presentation of the issues involved in the talks with the Micronesians.

We stated that the one way we can overcome this problem is through the establishment of a committee or commission by the Congress of Micronesia charged with the responsibility of formulating, reviewing and approving policies and programs of political education in Micronesia. This will free the Executive Branch of the planning and the policy-making responsibility and place it on a body created by the Congress. The Executive Branch involvement in the political education program will be in the execution of it.

(3) With regard to the problem of a disproportionately greater part of the daily broadcast programming being needlessly spent for meaningless musical entertainment and little or nothing at all for public service broadcasts on political education matters, we did not dispute this observation and we agreed that this is something that can and should be corrected. Although we did not convey it to the Ambassador, this is a problem that both districts and Headquarters will have to get together on to establish policy guidelines and to avoid any misunderstanding. Perhaps this is a matter that George Callison can start working on immediately.

As to what political education matters can be broadcast to fill this gap, our Civic Affairs Division, if fully staffed and operating, can go to work on this problem right away. But this is not the case. To date we have been unable to hire and fill the positions budgeted in this division. To get moving in this area we will need to greatly upgrade the priority status of this division. This will involve exempting it from the current freeze on hiring and increasing the Public Affairs' share of housing assignments. The one Capitol Hill quarters vacated by Luke Tman is currently occupied by Carl Heine. Several attempts have been made to secure trailer accommodation for our one new Civic Affairs hire, but these were to no avail.

With the impending move of the offices of Legislative Liaison, Civic Affairs, Public Information and the Director's office to our new office space, I am hopeful that some of these matters can be easily

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reson. In the meantime, I shall meet with both Jim Manke and George Callison and we will start knocking our heads together to formulate plans for an expanded political education program.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As will be noted from the Ambassador's remarks, we can be fairly certain that the section of the 1973 Visiting Mission report dealing with political education in Micronesia will be extremely critical of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. While we do not share the view that the budget for the Broadcasting Division is hopelessly low, it can probably be argued that perhaps we can do a lot more than we have done in the area of political education, with or without a Political Education Commission. Inasmuch as the Congress of Micronesia chose not to take any further action to continue the work outlined in PL 4C-96 during this past session, it appears a number of alternatives are available to us:

- (1) We can sit and wait for the next session of the Congress to enact legislation along the lines of PL 4C-96 as well as our recommendation that this commission be established and operated on a continuing basis to (a) provide, from time to time, policy guidelines; (b) formulate programs or program contents; (c) make periodic reviews of progress made against established deadlines and (d) approve or disapprove new political education proposals.
- (2) We can interpret Congress's inaction to mean that we may go ahead and plan, organize and conduct a more systematic program of political education in the Territory and not wait for the Congress of Micronesia. This can easily be accomplished by creating, through administrative fiat an advisory committee charged with the responsibility of advising the Department of Public Affairs in such matters as planning, programming and budgeting for an expanded program of political education in Micronesia. If we were to choose this route, we would need to review the offer made by USIA to have one of their employees detailed to TTPI to assist in the political education program. In the High Commissioner's letter of January 9, 1973, to DASTA Stanley Carpenter, we stated that the appointment of a USIA officer should be delayed a few weeks until we could see the recommendations of the Political Education Commission recently appointed under the provisions of PL 4C-96. This did not materialize.
- (3) This alternative is similar to the one outlined in (2) above, except that we will not request the assistance of USIA. We will do it on our own by either (a) detailing Mr. George Callison to the Division of Civic Affairs to carry out the necessary planning

and organizing of this expanded program or (b) exempting the Division of Civic Affairs from the current freeze on new hire and filling all the positions budgeted for this division. This will involve upgrading the priority of requirements of this division and transferring funds from other accounts to adequately fund this program.

RECOMMENDATION

My recommendation here will be to try alternative number 2. If this alternative should prove to be too problematic, then we should pursue alternative number 3. In the meantime, the conditions set forth in our January 9 letter to DASTA shall continue to govern our position with regard to the USIA offer.

[One of the points we made very clear to Ambassador Israelyan is that we as a government are particularly sensitive about our involvement in dissemination of information, especially in view of the Congress of Micronesia accusation that we are encouraging certain viewpoints while providing little or no coverage to others.]

Strik Yona

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