

4/18/73

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Prepared by Micronesian News Service

Saipan, Mariana Islands

April 2-6, 1973

HICOM SIGNS 32 BILLS

High Commissioner Edward Johnston last week signed 32 bills and vetoed 2 of the 62 passed by the Fifth Congress of Micronesia during its 1973 regular session. Among the bills signed are two important administration bills and several appropriation measures.

The "Trust Territory Community Housing Act of 1973", which now becomes Public Law 5-37 will provide safe, decent and sanitary housing for low-income families in Micronesia. Public Law 5-38 will provide for the taking of an official population census of the Trust Territory.

One appropriation measure signed into law will provide \$550,000 for the lengthening of the new runway and the paving of roads in Majuro in the Marshall Islands. Another appropriation bill to defray the operating and contingent expenses of the Congress of Micronesia from July 1973 to March 1974, in the sum of \$1,268,659, was also signed into law. A bill appropriating \$210,695 for the operating expenses of the Social Security Office for fiscal year 1974 became Public Law 5-39, while a measure to reduce the employee and employer contributions to the Social Security System and to extend coverage to certain self-employed persons became Public Law 5-15. Included in last week's signing are bills that provide for the creation of district fishing authorities and their operating expenses. Another measure signed will permit foreign fishing vessels to enter certain ports in Micronesia to obtain provisions and supplies and to permit shore leave for crew members.

Public Law 5-27 declares areas of Pagan Island in the Marianas as village and agricultural homesteads land, while Public Law 5-34 declares certain public lands in Sokehs Municipality of Ponape agricultural homesteads lands.

The first two bills to be disapproved this year were one that would have required vessels carrying passengers for hire to provide compensation or food and lodging to passengers who must make unscheduled debarkations and a bill that would have required Department of Education assistance to school feeding programs. Under terms of Secretarial Order 2918, legislation which is disapproved by the High Commissioner is returned to the Congress, which may reconsider such bills if it wishes.

Forty-two bills have now become law, of the 62 passed by the Congress during its 1973 regular session.

YAP WATER STILL CRITICAL

The water situation in Yap District is now more critical than ever. Residents

in the district center of Colonia were receiving only 30 minutes of water per day, in the evening last week. The water sources at the airport pond from which water has been hauled to the treatment plant reservoir for the past two and a half months was emptied as of April 3, and the estimated amount of water now in the reservoir was expected to last until only the beginning of this week. However, Yap should get some relief in the next few days, with an announcement April 4 that a water barge from the U.S. Navy will soon be loading water on Guam for transport to Yap. The barge is in the process of being readied for use at the Guam Ship Repair Facility; it has a capacity to hold more than a quarter of a million gallons of water.

CONGRESS BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning is recommending to the Micronesian Congress leadership that the budget of the Trust Territory should be taken out of the Interior Department and placed directly under the U.S. Congress.

This is the principal recommendation of the Committee, following hearings during March and early April regarding the Fiscal Year 1975 Trust Territory budget. The Committee feels that the "intermediary functions" of the Interior Department should be terminated, thus permitting the functions of government to be discharged directly through the Congress of Micronesia and the High Commissioner.

Chaired by Representative Raymond Setik of Truk, the Committee held hearings in each district during March and spent more than a week examining the budget proposals of the Marianas and Headquarters on Saipan. The Congressmen were looking for ways to hold the line on operations increases and reduce these expenditures where possible.

The Committee reported that although it is supporting the administration's Fiscal Year 1974 budget recommendations in hearings before the U.S. Congress this month, the Micronesian Congress may still press for management changes which will blend into a significantly changed mode of operation of the Trust Territory in Fiscal Year 1975.

CHANGES IN CLAIMS ACT URGED

According to an article by Gannett News Service, Interior Department officials have urged the U.S. Congress to amend the Micronesian Claims Act to help smooth the eventual flow of payments to the victims of World War II destruction. Deputy assistant secretary for territorial affairs Stanley S. Carpenter, along with other territorial office aides, told a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee that such an amendment would speed payment of claims to persons who lost relatives and property during the Pacific fighting and that it also would avoid the possibility of a huge cash payment flooding the islands' economy. The subcommittee told Carpenter and his associates that they would report the amendments favorably to the full Foreign Claims Committee for action.

Under existing law, the U.S. Foreign Claims Settlement Commission is charged with reviewing the war claims and then deciding which ones merit payment and

how much. When all claims have been reviewed and judged, the Commission recommends action by the Secretary of the Interior. Carpenter explained this will take much too long. The amendment he asked for would allow the claims to be forwarded to the Secretary of Interior for his action as the Settlement Commission completes each of them.

MICRONESIAN SEMINAR

An organization called the Micronesian Seminar is sponsoring a week-long seminar on the future political status of the Trust Territory, to be held in Ponape from June 3 to June 9 of this year.

Invitations are being issued to one dozen prominent individuals from all walks of life in Micronesia, including members of the Congress of Micronesia, political affairs personnel from the executive branch of the Trust Territory Government, Jesuit Priests, and others engaged in political education.

Created and run under the auspices of the Catholic Mission for the study of contemporary problems in Micronesia, the Micronesian Seminar will discuss at the Ponape meeting the fundamental issues involved in the choice of political status for Micronesia and the moral implications of the status question.

According to Father Francis Hezel, Micronesian Seminar director, it is the hope of the organization that the fruits of the Ponape meeting could be used in political education programs, whether these are initiated by the Church, the TT Administration, the Congress of Micronesia, or private individuals.

NEW CIVIC AFFAIRS CHIEF

Public Affairs Director Strik Yoma announced the appointment of Daiziro Nakamura of Palau District to the position of TT Civic Affairs Chief. In his new position, Nakamura will be responsible for the TT-wide program of political education. He was formerly Palau District's Legislative Liaison Officer.

TRANSPAC DROPS 2 SHIPS

TransPacific Line, Incorporated, the shipping company which holds an exclusive franchise to serve the Trust Territory, has discontinued chartering two of the three German ships it has been using for the past year. The Grethe Reith and the Mathias Reith are the two vessels that have been returned to their owners in Hamburg, Germany.

According to a spokesman at TransPac, the primary reason for the ships being taken off charter is that the company owning the ships requested an increase in the daily charter cost of the vessels. The Lotte Reith is the only vessel now under charter to TransPac, while the Gunners Knot and the smaller, inter-island vessel, the Mas Mauleg, are owned outright by TransPac.

TransPac is a private company based on Saipan and was formerly known as Micronesian Interocean Line (MILI).

The spokesman at TransPac gave assurances that adequate service to all the six districts can be maintained during the current crisis.

NOW, BRIEFLY, HERE ARE SOME OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST WHICH MADE NEWS DURING THE WEEK:

The U. S. Coast Guard announced April 5 that the Loran-A electronic aids to navigation stations in the Trust Territory will not be closed this year after all. Stations on Saipan, Angaur in Palau District, Eniwetok and Ebeye in the Marshalls, and Wake Island, in the northern Marshalls, but outside the TT, will remain open.

Mariana Islands District Administrator Francisco C. Ada vetoed a District Legislature bill which would allow gambling in certain premises in the Marianas and which would have established a gambling commission. Ada's reason for vetoing the bill was that he believed the Marianas was not yet ready for this type of legislation.

A Guam-based firm has resubmitted its request for a lease to construct a coconut oil processing plant on Tinian in the Marianas. The lease agreement is presently being reviewed by the Marianas Land Advisory Board.

Members of the TT Board of Education met on Saipan last week to review the 48 applications for the position of TT Director of Education. The High Commissioner will receive a recommendation from the Board regarding these applications and will then submit his nominee to the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Administrative Appointments for its advice and consent.

A TT delegation headed by Deputy High Commissioner Peter Coleman will attend the Fourth Annual Guam Economic Conference May 17 and 18. This year's conference will focus on lessons to be drawn from the experience of the island communities of Puerto Rico and Singapore.

Permission has been granted by the U.S. Defense Department to Continental/Air Micronesia to once again land and re-fuel at remote Johnston Island, between the Marshall Islands and Hawaii, to be effective April 29. This will enable Air Micronesia to eliminate its out-of-the-way run to Midway Island for refueling on its flights between Hawaii and Kwajalein.

High Commissioner Edward Johnston has announced the forty-two recipients of Congress of Micronesia Scholarship Awards for school year 1973-1974. The scholarship grants were made possible under newly signed Public Law 5-11.

Six TT Headquarters Communication Center operators completed last week a three-day session of on-the-job observation and instruction in long distance calling and PBX operation at the RCA Global Communications Facility in Guam.

TT students at the University of Guam will present a variety show at George Washington High School on April 13 and 14 for the purpose of collecting funds

for needy Micronesian students attending schools on Guam.

In Palau District, students from all schools, both private and public, will hold their first "Palau School Fair" April 5 through 7 in Koror.

Ambassador Paul Blanc of France, chairman of the recently-concluded United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory has written to High Commissioner Edward Johnston asking that his appreciation be conveyed, on behalf of the entire mission, to all those in Micronesia who met with the visiting diplomats.

The Fourth Regular Session of the Fifth Palau Legislature, convened April 3 in Koror.

A 22 year-old man is in satisfactory condition at Guam Naval Hospital after having been critically wounded in a fight in Koror March 31. The man was shot with a small, .22 caliber handgun, a weapon which is illegal under the the Trust Territory Weapons Control Act.