

6/25/73

Week in Review

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

Saipan, Mariana Islands

June 11-15, 1973

UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL HOLDS HEARINGS

The annual meeting of the United Nations Trusteeship Council to look into conditions in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands was held last week at the UN Headquarters in New York City. Making his fifth appearance before the Council as High Commissioner was Edward E. Johnston, who headed a Trust Territory delegation that included two members of the Congress of Micronesia as advisors, Senator Andon Amaraich of Truk and Representative Joab Sigrah of Kusaie, Ponape. The three men joined United States government council spokesman Ambassador William Schauffele in making the major presentations to the Council, which is made up of Representatives of the United States, Great Britain, Australia, France, the Soviet Union and China. Once again this year China declined to participate in the hearings. A major item for consideration by the Council was the visit earlier this year of an official mission, which traveled to all six districts during February and March. The Visiting Mission's Report was presented to the Council and discussed during last week's meetings.

The report was somewhat critical of certain aspects of U.S. administration of Micronesia, and in his opening remarks to the Council Ambassador Schauffele said the U.S. could not agree with some of the Mission's findings. He indicated appreciation, however, for the work done by the Mission, which spent nearly six weeks in the Territory.

High Commissioner Johnston reviewed accomplishments of the administration during the past year, including such areas as housing--the passage of the Housing Act of 1973; Political education--strengthening of an on-going program here; education--the appointment of a Micronesian Director; economic development--a turning point has been reached, with progress evident in the three major areas of tourism, fisheries, and agriculture; Micronesianization of top government positions--he cited recent high-level appointments; and Congress and district input to the budgeting process.

On the less positive side the High Commissioner also noted budget restrictions that will make some difficult decisions in priority setting for badly needed projects necessary, and he pointed out a serious and apparently worsening situation with regard to the Trust Territory's franchised shipping line, TRANSPAC.

Senator Amaraich and Congressman Sigrah, in their remarks, were quite critical of developments, or more precisely lack of development, in the TT during the past year. Amaraich concentrated his remarks on the areas of political education, future status and law of the sea, while Sigrah discussed economic development and education.

Senator Amaraich cited a "crisis of confidence" in the Trust Territory High Court, and called for a complete overhaul there; charged that through veto power the administration retains excessive control and limits the effectiveness of the Congress of Micronesia; said the U.S. should allow Micronesia to present her own position at the upcoming international conference on law of the sea, since the U.S. and Micronesian positions differ; and accused the U.S. of delaying the status talks, failing to clearly support a constitutional convention, and fostering the disunity of Micronesia through the separate talks with the Marianas.

Congressman Sigrah said the administration should take another look at its need for Public Land; should pay more attention to the needs and wishes of the Micronesian people regarding sea and Air Transportation; and called upon the Congress of Micronesia to set clear development goals, and upon the administration to support them.

Following the opening day of statements, there were questions and comment from the various country delegations to the council, and a day set aside for the hearing of petitions. Petitioners appeared representing the Friends of Micronesia, the Friends Service Peace Committee, the people of Angaur and the people of the Marianas. No one showed up to represent the students of Tinian, who had indicated through a letter that they wished to appear.

In their concluding observations, the National delegations had some interesting thoughts. The French delegate called for an immediate resumption of the stalled status negotiations, and suggested a trial referendum to find out what type of future status the people of Micronesia really want. The representative of the Soviet Union accused the United States of putting military interests first and of stalling the progress of development toward self-government in Micronesia. Australia's representative also urged resumption of the status talks with all six districts, urged that limitations be placed on the power of the veto; suggested adding the Deputy High Commissioner's position to those requiring advice and consent from the Congress of Micronesia; and urged that the process of forming a Micronesian constitution proceed. The representative of Great Britain noted the swift progress in the Marianas talks, and said in view of this the Council should "accept reality" and not try to reverse this process of separation of the Marianas from the other districts. He also urged the other districts to remain united, however, and he directed some words to the people of the Marianas, reminding them not to leave bitterness and divisiveness behind in their move toward a separate status.

On the final day of last week's proceedings there was an opportunity for additional comment from the U.S. and Trust Territory delegates. Ambassador Schaufele reaffirmed United States strategic and security interests in Micronesia, but said the U.S. intends to continue to strive for a political status agreement for the area, one which takes U.S. strategic interests into account. He also made the following comment concerning the Marianas negotiations.

"While it remains the position of the United States that the Trusteeship Agreement is to be terminated simultaneously for all six districts," he said, it is also the position of the United States that it would be proper to administer one part of the Territory separately from the other parts, as was done before in the Marianas.

Schauffele also denied that the U.S. has refused to discuss independence with the Congress Joint Committee on Future Status. He said the return of public land issue is the major block to resumption of the status talks at the present time.

High Commissioner Johnston responded to several specific questions raised earlier. He said political education programs are being stepped up; nearly half of the money spent by tourists in Micronesia remains in the Territory; the percentage of the total budget devoted to Marine Resources development will increase soon; there has been a decrease in the total number of expatriate government employees so far this year; a majority of the positions subject to advice and consent are already held by Micronesians; and he pledged a continuing effort on the part of those in the administration to prepare Micronesia for whatever form of future political status she may choose.

Senator Amaraich expressed his sadness at comments in the Council indicating the members are resigned to the separation of the Marianas from the Territory. If this Council allows the United States to continue its present course of ~~action, he warned, how can the Congress be expected to prevent the same~~ situation from occurring in the other districts? He accused the U.S. of dragging its feet on future status; and having its own military interests as the ultimate objective. Representative Sigrah noted the lack of harmony in the U.S. delegation between administration and Congress of Micronesia spokesmen, a situation which a member delegate had called attention to earlier. He said this was probably due to differing views of the reality of things in the Trust Territory. He also noted that the U.S. frequently uses the phrase "under consideration" while stalling on implementation of specific Micronesian recommendations, such as elimination of trade barriers. He said next year he hopes it will be possible to report more progress on these items. And he said the people of Papua New Guinea must surely appreciate the style of administration provided them by Australia, which will give New Guinea self-government by the end of this year.

The Trusteeship Council is now preparing its recommendations, which will go to the Security Council and to the U.S. as Administering Authority for implementation as it sees fit.

BRIEFLY, HERE ARE SOME OTHER ITEMS THAT MADE NEWS IN THE TRUST TERRITORY LAST WEEK:

The missing Marshallese ketch Miula was finally found and brought in to Ponape by the Truk islander. All eleven people aboard were all right, after drifting in their poorly equipped boat for more than three weeks. The boat had twice been the subject of massive and costly aerial searches before finally being found.

The TT government has issued a new tariff for its inter-island field trip vessels. All rates remain the same except for cabin passengers and meals, which are raised considerably, it is the first new tariff issued since 1968.

Passengers transitting Guam on their way to and from Trust Territory points may now elect to stay aboard their airplane if they want to avoid the time consuming and often annoying U.S. customs check at the Guam airport. Those getting off their planes will still have to pass through customs, however.

A committee in the Marshall Islands is looking into the possibility of Majuro hosting next year's Congress of Micronesia session.

Finally, the Trust Territory has been declared to be free of rabies, and also of the livestock disease hog cholera. The latter decision means pork products from the TT can now be shipped to Guam.