

7/31/73

Week in Review

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

Saipan, Mariana Islands

July 16-20, 1973

STATUS COMMITTEES TOUR

The two groups of members of the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Future Status continued their meetings last week with the people of Micronesia on the question of TT's future political status. The group covering the western districts and headed by Joint Committee Chairman Lazarus Salii completed its hearings in Yap, and then met with the leaders and people of Palau and left the district July 15.

From Palau, the group moved on to the Marianas for two days of meetings on Rota, a 1-day hearing on Tinian, and meetings on Saipan. Although the committee did not see much of Rota's population present at the meetings, the members got a warm reception from the Rota-Mariana Islanders-- residents of the district which has begun negotiating with the U.S. for Commonwealth-type status. Most of the questions asked of the committee were on the draft compact of free association, but other matters discussed included Rota's grave land problems, military land requirements, and the need for a political education program. To the committee's query of who would hold public lands in trust under the new Marianas or Micronesian governments, the Rotanese present at the meetings suggested the government, a public corporation, or an "unbiased outsider."

The committee was scheduled for a 1-day meeting on Tinian July 20, and was to move on to Saipan for more hearings, beginning July 23.

The sub-committee touring the eastern districts is headed by Joint Committee Co-Chairman Representative Ekpap Silk. The group completed its hearings in Truk District July 14, and since then has traveled from Ponape District Center to Mokil and Pingelap Atolls, and Kusaie Island in Ponape District by field trip ship. The members traveled on to Ebeye July 19, where the tentative schedule calls for two days of meetings there, a one-day trip to Jaluit, followed by four days of hearings at Majuro and Arno. The committee will then fly back to the Ponape District Center for two or three days of hearings in the municipalities of Ponape Island itself.

In Truk the committee's final meetings included discussions with the two groups which call themselves the Independence Advocates and the Anti-Independence Coalition. Both the Independence Advocates and the Anti-Independence Coalition spoke in favor of their positions, and both sides agreed that maintaining a unified Micronesia was important. Several basic

opinions emerged from the many and varied answers and statements. These are disagreements on what status is best for Micronesia, disagreements over how much control the U.S. should be given for foreign affairs, and disagreements about how quickly the status negotiations should proceed. The basic agreement was that the people need and want to have more information about the issues being discussed as decisions are made about the future of Micronesia, and that the people feel a unified Micronesia of all districts would be best for the future of the islands. Some of the issues discussed at the meetings, including those with the outer island residents now living in Truk District Center, came down to very basic needs. One question asked was which of the two major proposals--free association or independence--would "make our stomachs full."

TRUK STATUS STATEMENT

The leadership of the Truk Anti-Independence Coalition, Nick Bossy, issued a statement July 20, outlining the position of his group. The statement was issued in the wake of the visit to Truk two weeks ago by the Congress of Micronesia Committee on Future Status. Bossy indicated he hoped the Joint Committee would consider the statement.

Containing four parts, the statement reads as follows:

"The Anti-Independence Coalition requests that future negotiations with the United States should be suspended and negotiations among the districts should be made to determine what the Micronesian people really want regarding their political future status, and how and when to achieve that goal.

"There should be political education programs," the statement continues, "not only aimed at the different political alternatives, but also aimed at the function of a constitutional convention and the responsibilities of each citizen and of the delegates toward that convention.

Also, "A constitutional convention should be held to identify the unity of Micronesia and to determine agreements and disagreements regarding the political status, and at the same time developing political education programs aimed at resolving these differences. And if these differences persist, another constitutional convention should again be conducted until all the differences are resolved."

And finally, "When and only when unity is fully established in all respects, negotiations shall be conducted either with the United States or with any nation that would accept the mandate of the Micronesian people, based on the Constitutional development."

NEW IBEDUL ANNOUNCED

In Palau, Yutaka M. Gibbons was formally announced as Chief Ibedul of Koror and Leader of the Southern Confederation of the Palau Archipelago in ceremonies July 14. The investiture ceremony began many months ago when his uncle, High Chief Ibedul Ngoriakl, passed away.

Gibbons was appointed heir to the chiefstanship by Queen Bilung of Koror, who following Palauan tradition, referred the appointment to the Ngarameketii Elders Council of Koror for approval.

Because Gibbons still had a term to serve in the U.S. Army, the investiture ceremony was delayed until he had completed his service. The traditional ceremonies that made Yutaka chief of Koror and leader of the Southern Confederation of the Palau Archipelago began when he returned to Palau a little over a month ago.

High Chief Reklai of Melekeok is the leader of the Northern Confederation of Palau.

NEW EDUCATION DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Joseph H. Oakey, the new Deputy Director of Education for the Trust Territory, was scheduled to arrive on Saipan July 17, to assume his duties under Director David Ramarui.

Oakey is a former consultant in education planning and management in the state of Vermont. He has been in the Trust Territory before, during the month of January, when he was under contract to the TT Government working with education personnel in the schools in three districts. The High Commissioner announced his intention to appoint Oakey at the same time as the nomination of Ramarui to be Director of the Education Department was sent to the Congress of Micronesia for approval in May of this year.

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

A search initiated a week ago for the "Le Takinal," a 32-foot diesel cruiser in distress in the Marshall Islands ended successfully with the boat located and taken in tow by the Trust Territory vessel M/V Robert A. DeBrum.

The Department of Health Services has announced an accelerated measles immunization program in the Marianas District to inoculate as many children as possible against the disease. A measles outbreak on Guam prompted the immunization program in the Marianas.

The Department has also announced the appointment of two physicians, husband and wife, to the Health Services Department staff. Dr. Robert B. Fisher, a psychiatrist, will be the Chief of the Division of Mental Health and Dr. Willa M. Fisher, a pediatrician, will serve as Chief of Maternal Child Health and Crippled Children Services.

The Palau Community Action Agency has received a \$249,000.00 economic development grant from the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, for the purpose of establishing the Palau Economic Development Corporation, it was announced by the Territorial Economic Opportunity Office.

On Saipan, the TT Revenue Division has released revised tax booklets which contain new amendments to the Trust Territory income tax law.

The Trust Territory's first modern wastewater treatment plant went into operation July 16, at Agingan Point on Saipan. Other wastewater treatment plants are under construction at each of the district centers in the TT.

The TT Department of Public Works has begun advertising for bids for the construction of the Palau Bridge, which will span the Airai Channel between Koror and Babelthuap Islands. An extremely slow auto ferry is the only link now between Babelthuap Island, where the Palau Airfield is located and where large amounts of unused land are available as potential residential or agricultural plots, and Koror Island, where the bulk of the district's population lives and which is the center of commercial and government activity for Palau.

Ponape District Administrator Leo A. Falcam has given permission to a group of people from Kapingamarangi to re-populate the tiny island of Oroluk in western Ponape District. They can return by September if the necessary arrangements can be completed by that time.

At the unpopulated atoll, a Japanese fishing vessel which ran aground on or about June 29, has been declared a total loss.

And finally, Richard W. Miller, Economic Development Officer for the Interior Department's Territorial Affairs Office, is presently visiting the Trust Territory to obtain up-to-date information on TT economic development. This is Miller's third visit to the Territory since he was appointed Economic Development Officer about a year ago.