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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

The Old Executive Building  
Room 361  
Washington, D. C. 20506  
August 15, 1973

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Senator Lazarus Salii  
Chairman, Joint Committee on Future Status  
Congress of Micronesia  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Lazarus:

As Jim Wilson left Washington two weeks or more ago, I asked him specifically to convey to you my response to your cable of July 26. He has since briefed me on the results of his meeting with you on Saipan and your discussion of the Yamada-Neas-Rice case. Subsequently, I have also received excerpts from your statement before the JCFS Sub-Committee on July 25 in which you said that you wanted to make it clear that the issue was not a "status one", but rather a jurisdictional dispute between the Committee and the Executive.

I sincerely hope that this matter can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. In particular, I hope that the three gentlemen concerned will not be damaged because of their compliance with instructions from their superiors. I hope further that the dispute will not complicate or delay further progress in attempting to resolve the public land question. My primary concern is of course with the longer term political status question and the resumption of the negotiations leading to an agreement.

In the meantime, we intend to proceed with our effort to gather as much information as we can, including advice as to how the disposition of public trust land can best be accomplished. As I have stated many times, land now held in trust will be returned to Micronesian ownership and control. The questions remain--to whom, when, and how.

These are things we are looking into. We need the help and advice of Micronesians and employees of the TTPI Government. We are also seeking your cooperation and in this regard I understand you are sending me the JCFS answers to the questions posed in my memorandum of May 9. We also intend to consult with the JCFS on the subject land question after I have had the opportunity to study the information and consider the advice received by the two OMSN fact-finding missions during their visits to each District. The second team headed by Harmon Kirby will be arriving in Micronesia in a few days. I would again extend an invitation to you to have members of the JCFS present as this team visits the Marshalls, Ponape and Truk.

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You have asked about my negotiating intentions. I would refer you to my public statement released on May 9, 1973, at Majuro following our two presentations to the District Administrators Conference, in which I said:

"Throughout the negotiations on Micronesia's future status there has been a constancy of United States purpose and policy. The United States intends to live up to its treaty commitment. The United States has an obligation to the people of the Trust Territory to give them an opportunity to choose freely their own future. The United States intends to fulfill that obligation. While we have said that the Micronesians will have the full right of self-determination, that sovereignty resides in the people of Micronesia, it is also our responsibility to see that they are not stampeded into a decision on future status by vocal minorities urging one solution or another. On the other hand, we have no desire to delay an early resolution of the future status question. We favor an orderly transition to full self-government and termination of the Trusteeship Agreement on a timetable approved by the people concerned--the Micronesians themselves. The United States therefore stands ready to continue to work cooperatively with the Joint Committee on Future Status, with the leaders and the people of Micronesia, toward a status agreement reflecting the true will of the people."

Regarding our future work, Jim Wilson has informed me of your desire to get together this month if possible to discuss fully any issues at hand. If it suits you, I suggest we meet in Guam on August 30 as I pass through on my way to Southeast Asia. At that time I will be able to furnish you summaries prepared for me by the two land fact-finding missions reporting on the information gleaned from their recent visits to Micronesia. From initial reports it would appear that the overall problem involved in the settlement of the land issue is more difficult than we envisioned and I think that we should discuss the desirability of possible further consultations on this important problem later on this fall.

I look forward to hearing from you. With kindest regards and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

cc: Co-Chairman Ekpap Silk

Franklin Haydn Williams  
The President's Personal Representative  
for Micronesian Status Negotiations

JW:HW:dt

cc: OMSN  
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