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Honolulu 10/12/73

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR
AMBASSADOR WILLIAMS' PRESS CONFERENCE
POLITICAL EDUCATION

Question: Senator Salii and some other Micronesian leaders have charged you (the U.S.) with stifling the political education effort in Micronesia; I believe that they cite a radio script submitted by a Micronesian leader and approved by U.S. authorities in Saipan but later suppressed by your office in Washington. Would you comment on this?

Answer: Let me begin by saying that I believe that the program of preparing the people of Micronesia for greater self-government and an informed choice on their future political status deserves the highest priority on the part of all interested parties, Micronesians and Americans. As the Administering Authority, however, the U.S. has the primary responsibility for ensuring that the people are sufficiently informed to decide the key issues relating to their future from of government and its relations with the outside world. Unfortunately, to date, this program has not received the priority attention it deserves. One reason for this is our attempt to obtain agreement from the leaders of the Congress of Micronesia on a joint or cooperative approach, since they feel a strong responsibility for this process. While some progress has been made in the school system and in some of the districts, it is clear that much more needs to be done by all concerned. In this respect, the HICOM and I intend to continue to press our Micronesian colleagues for their agreement to a comprehensive cooperative program of straightforward political education at the taro roots; one that will explain the alternatives clearly and objectively. I have had some useful

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discussions with Senator Salii on what might be done to better enlighten the Micronesian "man in the lagoon" on the main political issues which will face him in the future and I think he agrees with me on the advantages of some type of cooperative effort. I have also talked recently to the HICOM about a stronger Administration program in this field, hopefully one that will have the full cooperation or support of the Congress of Micronesia. He has promised to double his efforts toward achieving this goal.

As to the so-called Heine radio script, we have been consulting with the HICOM and Senator Salii on what might be done to improve it. This has taken more time than we intended, but let me be clear on one point - at no time did we ever think of suppressing it or of frustrating similar initiatives. Our only interest is in ensuring that the people get the full story, not an incomplete or distorted version of U.S. objectives or policies on the crucial issue of status.