

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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STATUS TALKS SETS FOR MARIANAS

Round three in the negotiations between the United States and the Mariana Islands Political Status Commission over the future status of the Northern Marianas will take place on Saipan beginning December 6. The announcement was made last week following a two-day meeting in San Francisco between U.S. Ambassador F. Haydn Williams and Senator Edward Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas Commission.

The two men said in a joint statement that they had reviewed the progress that had been made during the negotiations in May and June of this year, and the further work which has been accomplished subsequently by joint working sub-committees. The agenda of the December talks "will include a review of some of the legal and constitutional questions left over from the last negotiating session, a further exchange on the future financial relationship between a commonwealth of the Northern Marianas and the United States government, and a continuation of the discussion of the future disposition of public land now held in trust for the people by the Trust Territory government, and future U.S. land requirements in the Marianas." The statement also said Ambassador Williams and Chairman Pangelinan had agreed "that a preliminary exchange of views on transition to self-government and the calling of a Marianas Constitutional Convention would be useful." The joint statement concluded: "In assessing the record of the past ten months since the opening of the talks leading to a political union of the Northern Marianas and the U.S., Senator Pangelinan and Ambassador Williams expressed satisfaction with the solid accomplishment in the negotiations to date. Both also expressed confidence that further progress would be made at the December meeting toward a mutually acceptable agreement which would be submitted to the Congress of the United States, the Marianas District Legislature and to the people of the Northern Marianas for their approval in the form of a plebiscite."

LARGER TALKS DELAYED

A slight delay in the opening of the larger status talks between the U.S. and the joint committee on Future Status of the Congress of Micronesia was announced last week. Originally expected to start on Saturday, November 10 in Washington, D.C., the opening day has now been changed to Tuesday, November 13. On Saipan, Senator Lazarus Salii, Chairman of the Joint Committee, said the additional time will give his delegation more time for preliminary meetings in Washington following the oral arguments before the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Board into the Saipan-Japan route case. Fully half of the Micronesian delegation will be offering testimony to the CAB in the case, which is scheduled to be heard November 8.

Senator Salii also said the negotiations could last as long as a month, although in view of the announcement that Marianas talks will begin on Saipan on the sixth of December it is considered likely that the Washington talks will last from two to three weeks. Timing depends to a great extent on whether the U.S. response to the question of the return of public land is acceptable to the Micronesian delegation, said Senator Salii.

JUDICIARY HEARINGS COMPLETED

The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations, chaired by Senator Andon Amaraich of Truk, completed its lengthy series of hearings into the state of law enforcement and the judiciary in the TT last week on Saipan. The Committee held meetings in each of the six districts, concluding with several days of testimony on Saipan.

Senator Amaraich said in a statement following the final day of hearings that the Committee found the state of the judiciary in Micronesia is "pretty sad." He said there is a great backlog of cases pending, and the quality of services rendered by the High Court is not good. He further stated that the Committee was concerned by what he described as a "lack of legal education and legal training" in the Trust Territory.

During the hearings the Committee concentrated largely on investigating the state of the judiciary, leaving law enforcement to another time. The Committee will prepare a report on its findings for presentation to the Senate at the next Congress session, which begins January 14 on Saipan.

LAW OF THE SEA OFFICIALS TOUR TT

A task force of top experts from the U.S. in the field of International Sea Laws toured Micronesia last week, stopping in Ponape, Truk and the Marianas. The group came at the invitation of the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Law of the Sea, and met in Truk with the Committee Chairman, Senator Andon Amaraich. The task force, which was headed by Howard Pollock, Deputy Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, came to the TT to familiarize itself with Micronesian concerns and wishes concerning the law of the sea, which will be the subject of a major International Conference early next year. Also travelling with the group through the TT was Leo Moser, U.S. Department of State Country Director in Washington for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Affairs. He is on a tour that will take him to several Pacific Nations.

BOARD OF ED MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS

The Trust Territory Board of Education has recommended the establishment of a Micronesian Archives--which would keep historic documents and other records--within the department of Education. The Board also adopted a resolution at its meeting last week on Saipan that would empower the Education Department to make recommendations toward equalizing the classification and salary schedules of educators with other departments, and a resolution asking for the elimination of the current teacher hiring limits to provide for the growth of teaching staffs concurrent with increases in student populations.

The Board met for five days, under the Chairmanship of Father Felix Yaoch of Palau. Resolutions and statements of policy go to the High Commissioner in the form of recommendations for his consideration.

GOVERNMENT MAY TAKE OVER WCTC

The financially troubled Western Carolines Trading Company (WCTC) in Palau was the subject of a news story last week, as it was revealed that the firm's Board of Directors has asked the Trust Territory government to step in and take over management of the Company. A stockholders meeting has been called for early in November to consider the proposal.

One of the oldest trading companies in Micronesia, and one of the first publicly-owned Micronesian companies, WCTC engages in the import-export business in Palau, has a retail outlet, buys copra, and operates a chicken and egg business. There are about 400 Micronesian stockholders in the company.

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

TransPacific Lines announced that it is conducting a study, with the aide of outside consultants, into the current transportation system, services and rates provided by TransPac, with an eye toward making recommendations to the Water Transportation Review Board October 29.

A former TT employee who now works with the Department of the Interior, Harry U. Brown, will visit Micronesia during the next several days. He will sit in as an observer on the semi-annual District Administrators Conference, due to begin on Saipan November 5.

The Palau Community Action Agency has created the Palau Economic Development Corporation to provide loans and technical assistance to existing and new small business in the district.

Cooperative/Credit Union week was noted with picnics and other appropriate observances in several districts last week, recognizing the important role played in the economic life of nearly all Micronesian community by Cooperatives and Credit Unions.

The Trust Territory Personnel Department is participating in a series of seminars with personnel officials from Hawaii, New Zealand and Fiji, using the communications facilities of the Pan Pacific Satellite (PEACESAT).

A young man from Saipan, Luis Q. Kapileo, is in custody in the Philippines in connection with the shooting death of a fellow crewman aboard the M/S Gunner's Knot in September. U.S. authorities in Manila and Cebu are working to obtain his release.

TransPacific Lines has announced that the M/S Mas Mauleg, which presently serves Kusaie, will go into drydock at the end of October. The Company says it will provide interim service to Kusaie and Ebeye with the new ships it has chartered from the TT, the M/S Muskingum and Herkimer.

The Palau District Legislature concluded its Fifth Regular Session last week in Koror. 21 Resolutions and 14 Bills were passed.

The High Commissioner has named Cooperative/Credit Union Advisor Charles M. Sicard as the Headquarters coordinator for all fishing authority affairs as found in Public Law 5-21. It will be his responsibility to coordinate and follow-up on all affairs related to the Fisheries Development Act of 1973.

And finally, celebrations were held in several districts last week to mark United Nations Day, which is an annual holiday in the Trust Territory.