

Established July 2, 1956

THURSTON TWIGG SMITH *President & Publisher*
GEORGE CHAPLIN *Editor-in-Chief*
BUCK BUCHWACH *Executive Editor*
JOHN GRIFFIN *Editorial Page Editor*
GENE HUNTER *Associate Editor*

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1973

Micronesia: how bad?

The collapse of the seventh round of talks on the political future of the U.S. Trust Territory in Washington last week is an obvious disappointment.

The deeper question is whether it is also a disaster in the four-year attempt to negotiate an agreement satisfactory for both the interests of the Micronesian people and those of American security.

THE SPECIAL status committee from the Congress of Micronesia has now headed home to discuss where it will go from here. There are several possible directions.

In September, *The Advertiser* talked in Saipan with the Committee's co-chairman, Senator Lazurus Salii who expressed some doubts about the viability of his concept of free association — a status where the U.S. would keep control of foreign affairs and defense while the Micronesians have complete internal self-government and an option for independence later.

"Maybe our approach is wrong," Salii said then. "Either we could tell the U.S. we want to consider independence or ask them to establish self-government under the (United Nations) trusteeship and let that government negotiate . . . It could be a form of de facto free association."

THE PARTING in Washington was described as not angry but disappointing. The impasse was said to be over how much money the U.S. would provide a Micronesian-run government, including various forms of help plus substantial fees for military uses.

The difference was described as substantial, with the Micronesians asking roughly twice what the U.S. is offering. Essentially, the U.S. proposal is geared to less than our present budget (some \$60 million this year) while the Micronesians are seeking more.

In financial terms it does not seem an unbridgable gap — if both sides are willing to compromise, and if this can be considered strictly in money terms.

IN THE STORY quoting Salii, we pointed out Micronesia is not a simple situation.

Mixed in are America's paramount fixation on security (both bases and denying access to others), the fact of separate status talks in the Marianas district and some separatist sentiment in other districts, a mixture of honest fears and some self-seeking among Micronesian politicians, lingering doubts about Washington's sincerity and questions about its tactics, and the reality that, one way or another, the U.S. is likely to continue providing more than 90 per cent of the money it takes to operate Micronesia for quite some time.

How much it's now a straight-forward financial difference and how much other factors enter is something that may be better seen in coming weeks.

The American negotiators are due in the Trust Territory capital of Saipan next week for another round on the smoother separate negotiations on the political future of the Marianas district. There will be a chance for some informal talks with the other Congress of Micronesia negotiators.

SOMETHING MAY come to rather quickly get the big status talks back on the track of working out an agreement on free association that could be implemented by degrees over the next few years.

But what may be more likely is a period of Micronesian discussion and soul-searching, and the seeking of a new approach — something a number in the island territory think is what's needed.

pd
U
la
ga
the
see
wo
oil
the
vat
T
a s
ern
by
no
sou
A
me:
suc
ove
hav
pro
tio
the
in
dt
m
sc
rr
T
n
w
d