

DEAL

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A-6 from Saipan

Congress of Micronesia - House Journal
August 8, 1974

Representative Heine: Mr. Speaker, members of the House: I think right now would be a good time for all of us to take a break and rest for a few minutes. All of us realize, of course, the significance of these important bills and resolutions before us, but for a moment I would like to inject some perspective into our deliberations so we can focus more clearly on what we are trying to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, when this Congress first convened here on Saipan in July, 1965, many of our traditional leaders came to witness that historic event. One such leader from my home district, the Marshall Islands, compared the opening of our Congress to the launching of a new sailing canoe. Our wise chief said this canoe was beginning a most important journey, a rendezvous with destiny, so to speak, and that the crew members on this vessel were carefully chosen and made up of able men from each of the six districts of Micronesia.

Our able chief, who was Iroij Lejellan Kabua, said that the christening or launching of the Congress was like what we Marshallese call "Jerakiarlap", meaning that when crew members raise the sail of the canoe in public view, the point of no return is reached. At that point there can be no turning back. The voyage must go on. To do otherwise would be humiliating and an admission of failure--a loss of manhood. His words, Mr. Speaker, apparently impressed many individuals at that opening session. The late Chief Petrus Mallo of Truk, for example, praised Iroij Kabua's words, reminding all those at the first meeting of the Congress that the sun rises in the east bringing light to sustain life--meaning that all Micronesians must not only look to themselves, but beyond their districts for counsel and direction.

Mr. Speaker, nine years have now passed since we launched our canoe. We have laid the groundwork for our Constitutional Convention.

We have sighted the island of self-government on the horizon. Therefore, we must continue on our charted course and heed the words of our wise Chiefs Petrus Mallo and Kabua, and continue working together or else our canoe will drift.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of recent events in my home district, I wonder if some of my people have forgotten the words of our chief. And at the same time, I wonder if the other crew members of this canoe, from Yap, Ponape, Palau, Truk, and Marianas, in the Congress of Micronesia, will jeopardize the future success of our voyage towards destiny because we cannot reach agreement on ways and means of dividing up our provisions for our long journey.

At this time I wish to remind this Congress that the Marshall Islands has unselfishly provided over half of the provisions and materials which keep this canoe afloat financially--which benefits not just the Marshall Islands but all the people of Micronesia. Secondly, I wish to remind this Congress that there are those in the Marshall Islands who live by and die by the principle of "jerakiarlap".

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They believe that we must continue this voyage and continue working together, because this is the only way we can preserve our island way of life, our customs and traditions. In fact, Mr. Speaker, even though there are those in the Marshall Islands in places of prominence and power who have become impatient with the crew members from other districts on this historic voyage, and would risk the Marshall Islands itself by being divided politically, there are also others who would rather see solidarity and cooperation keep us sailing together. They know well that if we face the world singularly, one by one, we will eventually be assimilated or wiped out. The rest of the world can cut off our fingers one by one, but they realize if we stay together, we make a powerful fist.

Mr. Speaker, the story of our canoe voyage in this Congress when told to future generations must not be a tale of fragmentation caused by self-interests. As for me, I hope the story of our voyage will be the story of how a Pacific nation rose up from a situation of extreme dependency to a self-sufficient, self-governing nation of proud Micronesians.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you and all the other crew members in this House to support those Marshallese who believe in the principle of "jerajariar" and who believe in continued cooperation and working together.

We must not become the legendary canoe of two navigators, each unwilling to yield and compromise, that sat stubbornly facing each other while the wind knocked down their sail and the current carried them over the horizon, never to be heard from again.

Mr. Speaker, let us continue on our charted course under a full sail, making the "winds of change" work for us. With these thoughts in mind, our destination is clear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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