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Congress of Micronesia - House Journal  
August 8, 1974

Representative Oberill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer a few remarks:

Mr. Speaker and fellow members of the House: Next year the Congress of Micronesia will celebrate its tenth anniversary. In thinking about this fact, I have been troubled by a daydream which seems all too real to me, and which has caused me to be uneasy. While we cannot always solve problems by talking about them, it sometimes helps. So if you will bear with me for a few minutes, I would like to relate this daydream to you, in the hope that it will relieve my uneasiness.

This daydream consists of two histories of Micronesia. Both histories result from actions taken at a particular point in time, on certain important issues. The time is not certain, and neither are the issues. But I believe the time is in the very near future, and the issues are ones very important to all of us.

In the first history, I see a lack of positive action by the Congress, resulting in a situation where the Congress actually becomes ineffective and paralyzed by the refusal of some districts to continue to participate in it. Consequently, at the Constitutional Convention, the Marianas District withdraws, the Marshalls boycott the convention, and the Palau delegates walk out when the remaining districts refuse to accede to their demands for local control.

As a result of these actions, the Marianas is swallowed up by and incorporated into the Territory of Guam; the United States changes its mind and finally accedes to the request of the Marshalls and negotiates a relationship whereby they are associated with Guam and what once was the Marianas, but retain some local autonomy.

Palau splits from all of the Districts, and becomes an independent republic supported in various parts by its own local economy, serving as an air and sea link in the Pacific, and also by virtue of military land leases which it has accepted, but not by Free Association, which it has rejected.

Ponape, Truk and Yap remain the only districts to stay together, but because the other districts have split away, a loose association is formed with no central government. And although some assistance is forthcoming from the United States, the economy and the government services deteriorate and the people must live on a bare subsistence level.

Within 30 years--a generation--what once was Micronesia is gone. Huge foreign banking and commercial interests have a strangle hold on all the former districts. The United States military rules its preserves which were carved out in the midst of national confusion. United States nationals leave and are replaced by third country nationals who are unpopular but needed, and who, eventually carve small economic empires into the economy, at the expense of Micronesians. And worse yet, well-trained and capable Micronesians desert their home islands to be absorbed in the economic mainstream of America and Japan. Eventually the almighty dollar and the almighty yen suborn the most desirable of principles and Micronesian land is sold to foreigners. Eventually the Palauans, Marshallese, Chamorro, Yapese, Trukese, and Ponapeans join their northern Hawaiian brothers and sisters as an exploited, diminished, and moribund people.

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That is the first history of which I day dream. The second history is quite different.

In this version, because of the refusal of the United States to yield to certain demands of the Marianas, they decide to join the rest of Micronesia; the Marshalls, satisfied with new financial arrangements, put their status commission to work explaining the value of the future status agreement negotiated by the Congress' Joint Committee; and Palau, heartened by acceptance of its version of central versus district authority relationships, becomes one of the major forces in working for Micronesian unity.

Consequently, the constitutional convention is a success, with seven strong and united districts in a spirit of brotherhood and cooperation creating a new government of Micronesia based on democratic principles and Micronesian customs.

Within 30 years, the compact between the people of Micronesia and the United States of America has been terminated, and military leases are not renegotiated. Micronesia, now 250,000 people strong, becomes a model Pacific nation; a neutralized area in the Pacific with a protective treaty with the United States. The marketing of fish and coconut products, the exploitation of manganese nodules and other mineral resources, the rise of controlled tourism, and the emergence of Micronesia as a duty-free, shipping and financial center of the Pacific, results in an economy which allows great progress along lines chosen by Micronesians themselves.

That is the other history.

The real history of Micronesia lies, of course, somewhere between these two extremes. My simple point is that in the heat of the moment and in the clash of personalities and principles, we may forget who it is we really represent in this Congress. And let me say, we do not represent the voters at home. No, we represent our children and their children.

The choices today are ours, but the future is theirs. Which of these histories will they inherit? Let us take heed to these two possibilities and carve for ourselves a destiny and future that will ensure for all of us and for the generations of Micronesians to come happiness and a productive island lifestyle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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Congress of Micronesia - House Journal  
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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 chartered 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 "Jerajjarlap" 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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Congress of Micronesia - Senate Journal  
August 8, 1974

President Nakayama: Does anyone else wish to make remarks? If not, I wish to make a brief statement.

Fellow members of the Senate, distinguished guests:

At the beginning of this Fifth Congress of Micronesia I delivered a long speech.

Over four years ago, I delivered a short speech. The themes of both the long and the short speech were the same: "Micronesia Ought to be an Independent State."

Political scientists, politicians, and historians all have their different definitions of independence, and I am sure we all have different ideas of what kind of independence we want for Micronesia.

My definition of independence is a simple one: Independence to me means that a people can decide and act on any matter without asking permission from anybody else.

This has been and still is the goal of this Congress in enacting legislation, in its talks concerning the Compact of Free Association, and in creating the Micronesian Constitutional Convention.

In reaching for this goal, we need to improve our economy and our government. However, these goals will not be reached if people keep arguing and disagreeing among themselves in this Congress, in the Administration, and in the districts. We must stop all our fighting with words over little things. We must all fight for ways to better our economy. We must fight for ways to help create a better Micronesian state.

Enough has already been said on the floor of the Senate about what we should do. There have been some very good ideas offered by members of the Senate. But the Micronesian people will not judge this Congress on the number of speeches we make, but only upon the legislation we enact which creates a strong economy and a strong government to replace the present trusteeship system.

If we use our efforts and time now correctly in dealing with larger and bigger issues, then it may be that by doing this we will also solve the smaller problems which bother us. If we use our time and energy wisely, then we will build a future where Micronesians govern themselves and depend upon themselves. At that time we can take care of the other matters -- both big and small -- which have been troubling us.

Therefore, I look forward to the next session when all of us will have the chance to turn our ideas and words into action and positive results for our people.

As is traditional, before closing these remarks I wish to extend the thanks of the Congress to those people who have helped it during the past two years.

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