

2 Object To TT Budget Changes

SAIPAN (MNS)—At the conclusion of more than a week of budget hearings, the chairman and co-chairman of the Congress of Micronesia's joint committee on program and budget planning have sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton objecting to proposed changes in the Trust Territory budget made without the committee's knowledge.



REP. SETIK

Chairman Raymond Setik and co-chairman Bailey Olter sent the letter, following an earlier dispatch, protesting plans initiated by U.S. Ambassador Franklin Hayda Williams and the TT administration to shift funds from the proposed 1975 or 1976 supplemental budget request for a project for the Mariana Islands District.

According to the letter, the Marianas District is seeking \$4.5 million for a power plant, funded by removing a request for three new field trip vessels from the 1975 supplemental budget request or by deleting programs from the other five districts' budgets for 1976.

The joint letter to Morton, which also notes that funds for an additional ship were refused by the U.S. Congress for this year's 1974 supplemental budget and that two ships for 1975 were deleted to allow funds for a land cadastre program, indicates that the committee realizes "the Marianas have critical power problems—but we are also acutely aware that the other districts have critical power problems, too."

The co-chairmen wrote Morton that they learned

projects in Palau; cut \$750,000 from road construction in Ponape; drop \$770,000 from water projects in Truk; reduce road-building programs in Yap by \$348,000; and cut headquarters spending for heavy equipment \$1.4 million.

The congressmen wrote Morton: "We must take the strongest possible exception to this readjustment, despite our awareness of the needs of the Mariana Islands District."

Listing their objections, Setik and Olter said budget requests for Marianas District power plant facilities are included under phase two of the Financial Assistance Plan for that district. They added that efforts are being made to place U.S. Navy barge with a generating capacity of 30,000 kilowatts on Saipan as early as February, 1975, and that Marianas officials are considering two "very firm" proposals for private companies to operate the Marianas power facilities on a commercial basis.

"In terms of priorities," wrote the congressmen, "both the congress and the districts have pushed for new ships, and for Ambassador Williams of the Office of Micronesia Status Negotiations make these changes is to place him in the position of knowing our problems and priorities better than we do."

Setik and Olter said they could not comment on possible motives behind the proposed budget changes, but said they believe that the review function of the joint committee on



SEN. OLTER

United Nations Trusteeship Council and the congress, this has not been done.

"We are, in short, becoming extremely pessimistic about the future working relationship between the congress and the Department of Interior in both reviewing and supporting annual regular and supplemental requests before the United States Congress," they wrote. "It gives us no great pleasure to state that the very real possibility may exist in the future that Congress of Micronesia representatives who appear with the high commissioner before committees of the U.S. Congress may be forced to present views diametrically opposed to those of the high commissioner and the department or that, more drastically, the congress may choose not to attend such meetings in the future."

Reminding the Interior secretary of a message he delivered to the people of Micronesia throughout the future of January that "the future of Micronesia is a Micronesian matter," the congressmen expressed the hope that "neither the congress, the high-commissioner, nor the Department of Interior wish to sever what has been in the past a valuable and productive working relationship."

program and budget planning is being "increasingly eroded by ex-post-facto decisions" by the administering authority, which they charged "undermines any reasonable input from the Congress of Micronesia."

Setik and Olter explained that this is one major reason the joint committee on program and budget planning has requested that the U.S. Congress allocate block grant funds for Micronesia to the congress so that it may, through committee, set up priorities and programs as determined by the Micronesian people.

They noted, however, that despite strong recommendations from the high commissioner, the