

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Prepared by Micronesian News Service

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FINAL ACTIONS ON BILLS TAKEN

The final action on bills from the summer special session of the Congress of Micronesia on Saipan was taken last week by High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston. The HiCom signed two measures, and disapproved two others, making the totals for the session 21 bills signed into law and two vetoed and returned to the Congress.

The measures which were disapproved were two of the most important bills passed by the Congress during the session, and the HiCom said he took the action "with regret" and only after long deliberation. Turned down were a bill providing for the transfer of public land to the districts, Senate Bill 296, and a bill amending the constitutional convention law to, among other things, provide for a credentials committee, Senate Bill 347.

Regarding the bill on transfer of public land, the High Commissioner enclosed in his veto message an opinion on the bill issued by TT Attorney General Richard Miyamoto which pointed out certain important defects in the bill with relation to the United States policy, announced last November, which authorized the transfer of public land to district control. That policy had been issued by the Interior Secretary in response to requests originally put forth by leaders in Micronesia, and it was subsequently endorsed by the Congress' Joint Committee on Future Status. The policy sets out certain limitations and safeguards which must be complied with so that the United States, through the TT Government, can fulfill its responsibilities to the people of Micronesia.

The High Commissioner said, however, that the bill passed by the Congress, instead of facilitating transfer of title to the districts, "...would, in fact, impair this action."

"The Congress of Micronesia," he said, "has now endeavored twice to comply with the request of the administering authority and the people of Micronesia to pass enabling legislation that would transfer public land to local control. Because deficiencies in the bill required disapproval, I am prepared to take whatever executive action might be necessary to fulfill the administration's commitment to facilitate this transfer. Executive action, however, will be taken only upon the formal request of a district and only if the conditions set forth in the public land policy statement are met. I am hopeful that such a transfer of public land will satisfy the original Micronesian

requests..."

In his letter to the Congress on Senate Bill 347, the HiCom said most of the amendments proposed to the constitutional convention law were good ones, and should be re-passed by the Congress. But, he said, problems arose with two sections of the bill relating to the timing of any future political status plebiscite and the referendum on the constitution, and to participation in, and approval of, the constitution by the people of Micronesia in that referendum. "The Mariana Islands District," the HiCom stated, "is now negotiating for its own political status, and may have already adopted a constitution and voted in its own plebiscite before the other districts of Micronesia. This bill would have required the plebiscite to take place on the same day as the referendum throughout the Trust Territory. The nature and timing of any political status plebiscite is the responsibility of the administering authority." The High Commissioner said for this reason, the bill must be vetoed. He expressed the hope, however, that the Congress and the administration will work together toward their shared goals of increased self-government and responsibility for Micronesia.

The two bills signed last week were an appropriation measure, setting aside \$102,000 for public projects in Kusaie, which now becomes Public Law 5-109; and a bill to revise and strengthen the Trust Territory Code as it relates to harmful substances such as drugs, which now becomes Public Law 5-110.

DEFENSE OFFICIAL VISITS

The Deputy United States Secretary of Defense, William D. Clements, Jr., visited Saipan and Tinian last week on an inspection trip to familiarize himself with present and planned military installations. Clements flew to Saipan following a one-day visit on Guam, aboard a special military aircraft. He met with Marianas District and Headquarters government officials and political leaders, and took a flying tour by helicopter of Saipan and Tinian which included several stops for closer inspection of such areas as the military retention land around Saipan's Charley Dock, and the San Jose harbor area on Tinian. Clements was accompanied on his visit by a number of other top civilian and military defense department officials.

ISLEY PLANS NEAR COMPLETION

Plans and specifications for Saipan's new international airport at Isley Field are now nearly complete. District officials are in Honolulu this week for a meeting with personnel of the Ralph M. Parsons company, architects who are doing the design work. After the final review of the design facilities, a pre-bid conference will be scheduled, according to Addison Marrow, budget officer for the Marianas. He said the facilities are to include a duty-free complex, bar, restaurant, landscaping, roads and a fire and rescue building. The terminal facility building itself is to be constructed by Sablan Construction Company of Saipan, and should be ready in early or mid 1975, when the renovation of the runway on the old bomber field is complete. At that time, use of the present Kobler Field would be phased out, and passengers to and from Saipan would begin using the new international airport.

PRE-CONCON AND ESG GROUPS TRAVELLING

The Pre-Convention Committee of the Micronesian Constitutional Convention completed its initial round of visits in the districts last week, and returned to Saipan where hearings will also be held this week. The group, headed by Senate President Tosiwo Nakayama, is visiting the districts to learn the feelings of the people regarding the constitution. The meetings in most of the districts went very well, but in the Marshall Islands some meetings had to be cancelled and others were sparsely attended due to the continuing opposition of one powerful faction of political and traditional leaders. Some critical comments were directed at the committee there, and the participation of the Marshall Islands in the convention remains as uncertain as ever. Although elected delegates have been certified, the election was ignored by the majority of the people, and the district has yet to select its traditional concon delegates, or a delegate representing the district's congressional delegation. Without this organization, the Marshalls is not officially represented on the pre-convention committee, although elected delegate Carl Heine, Deputy Director of Public Affairs, did travel with the committee.

Another group visiting the districts last week was the Headquarters Task Force on Education for Self Government. Headed by the Chief of the Headquarters Civic Affairs Division, Daiziro Nakamura, the ESG people were also sounding out opinions and reactions to the program at the district level, in an effort to make the program fully responsive to the felt needs of the people. This group also encountered some criticism in the Marshalls, however, although they did manage to have some successful meetings there.

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

Micronesians who are either married to, or adopted by, non-Micronesian citizens, and who are engaged in business in the Trust Territory, were reminded last week that they only have until October 25 to comply with provisions of Public Law 5-85. The law requires persons or corporations in these circumstances to register as foreign businesses. The applications, for which there is no filing fee, should be filed with the Department of Resources and Development. Approval is automatic, a spokesman for the department said.

Ten Taiwan fishermen caught for the second time in the act of poaching marine resources from remote Helen Reef in Palau District earlier this year, were fined \$500 each and sentenced to five months in jail last week in Koror.

The Joint Committee on Administrative Appointments, under its chairman, Senator Andon Amaraich (Truk), will begin hearings October 12 on Saipan into seven recent appointment nominations made by the High Commissioner.

Palau's High Chief Reklai Lomisang was hospitalized last week on Guam, said to be suffering from pneumonia. Chief Reklai is 73.

A Government expert will arrive in the TT next month to conduct a cost-of-living study.

The Marianas Popular Party, in a convention delegate vote last week, has withdrawn its support from two-term incumbent Congressman Felipe Q. Atalig. Instead, the party has nominated Herman Palacios of Saipan to run for Atalig's seat. Congressman Atalig intends to run for re-election this November anyway, possibly splitting the Popular Party in the process.

Micronesia has great potential for off-shore fishing, but it will require great amounts of outside capital and expertise to develop it, according to new Marine Resources Chief, Chris Mitchell. He discussed fishing in an interview last week on Saipan.

And finally, Truk District Juan Sablan was given a special award last week for his "great support and interest in the Boy Scout Program in Truk." The award was presented by scout field services director Jerry Dempsey. The scouting program has been active in Truk for only a little over one year, but has proven to be very popular.