

(STATUS REPORTS PRESENTED)

SAIPAN, JAN. 15 (MNS)---THE SECOND DAY OF THE CURRENT SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TUESDAY (JAN 15) ON SAIPAN SAW LITTLE FORMAL BUSINESS TRANSACTED. BUT THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS PRESENTED THE LENGTHY TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS COMPILED FROM PUBLIC HEARINGS THAT WERE HELD THROUGHOUT THE TRUST TERRITORY LAST SUMMER (SEE FOLLOWING STORY).

SENATOR LAZARUS SALII, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE, MADE THE PRESENTATION IN THE SENATE, WHILE CO-CHAIRMAN REPRESENTATIVE EKPAP SILK (MARSHALLS) PRESENTED THE DOCUMENTS IN THE HOUSE. FOR PURPOSES OF THE HEARINGS THE TWELVE-MEMBER JOINT COMMITTEE WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO SUB-COMMITTEES, ONE OF WHICH HELD HEARINGS IN THE WESTERN DISTRICTS OF PALAU, YAP AND THE MARIANAS, WHILE THE OTHER TOURED TRUK, PONAPE AND THE MARSHALLS IN THE EAST. SENATOR SALII AND REPRESENTATIVE WERE CHAIRMAN OF, RESPECTIVELY, THE WESTERN AND EASTERN GROUPS.

COMMENTING ON THE HEARING TRANSCRIPTS, SENATOR SALII SAID, "THEY PROVIDE INTERESTING READING. THEY ALSO PRESENT AN EXCELLENT WINDOW TO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE MICRONESIAN PEOPLE..." ON THE SUBJECT OF POLITICAL STATUS.

"WHILE IT IS TRUE," THE SENATOR CONTINUED, "THAT THE MAJORITY OF MICRONESIAN PEOPLE HAVE NOT MADE UP THEIR MINDS YET... BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF POLITICAL EDUCATION... NEVERTHELESS, THE SUB-COMMITTEES FOUND THAT OVER THE YEARS, BECAUSE OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THIS CONGRESS AND BECAUSE EACH ROUND OF STATUS NEGOTIATIONS IS PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE TRUST TERRITORY, PEOPLE HAVE SOME VERY BASIC QUESTIONS THAT THEY WANT ANSWERED. WE CAN SAY NOW THAT THERE IS A STRONG FOUNDATION UPON WHICH TO CONDUCT FURTHER POLITICAL EDUCATION BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA CAN BE CALLED UPON TO DECIDE THEIR FUTURE STATUS."

CONGRESSMAN SILK, IN HIS REMARKS TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SUMMARIZED SOME OF THE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES, AND BRIEFLY POINTED OUT SOME OF THE AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE PEOPLE FROM WHOM THEY HEARD. THESE INCLUDE, AMONG OTHERS, THE NEED FOR MORE POLITICAL EDUCATION, THE USE OF PUBLIC LANDS, AND THE NEED TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP THE RESOURCES OF THE WATERS SURROUNDING MICRONESIA.

VOTING TO ADOPT THE REPORTS WAS DELAYED TO GIVE MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES TIME TO GO OVER THE MATERIAL.

FLOOR ACTION TUESDAY WAS LIMITED. HOUSE MEMBERS HAD A BILL TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY TO ENGAGE IN COPRA PROCESSING (HB 49) ON THE CALENDAR FOR SECOND READING, BUT ACTION ON IT WAS DELAYED. SENATE MEMBERS APPROVED A BILL ON ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (SB 135) ON FIRST READING, WHICH IS LARGELY A FORMALITY, AND SENT IT TO COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION. BOTH HOUSES ARE IN RECESS UNTIL TEN WEDNESDAY MORNING.

(CALL USERS, PLEASE CREDIT THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)

(STATUS REPORTS SHOW SUPPORT FOR UNITY)

SAIPAN, JAN. 15 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---THE CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS, SENATOR LAZARUS SALII AND REPRESENTATIVE EKPAP SILK, PRESENTED TWO SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS TUESDAY (JAN. 15), SUMMARIZING OVER 50 HEARINGS HELD THROUGHOUT THE TRUST TERRITORY LAST JULY. THE REPORTS INCLUDED PUBLIC SENTIMENT CONCERNING ISSUES SUCH AS POLITICAL EDUCATION, MICRONESIAN UNITY, PUBLIC LANDS, AND STATUS ALTERNATIVE PREFERENCES.

IN DELIVERING THE REPORTS TO THE SENATE, PALAU SENATOR LAZARUS SALII, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE, WHO HEADED THE SUB-COMMITTEE THAT TRAVELED TO THE WESTERN DISTRICTS OF YAP, PALAU AND THE MARIANAS, SAID A GENERAL LACK OF POLITICAL AWARENESS STILL HAMPERS THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA FROM MAKING A MEANINGFUL CHOICE OF A FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS, BUT HE SAID THEIR FINDINGS INDICATED THAT THE "OVERWHELMING SENTIMENT OF THE PEOPLE... BELIEVE AND SUPPORT THE UNITY OF MICRONESIA AS BEING IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL OUR PEOPLE."

MARSHALLS REPRESENTATIVE SILK, IN HIS EASTERN DISTRICTS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT, WHICH INCLUDED HEARINGS HELD IN TRUK, PONAPE AND THE MARSHALLS DISTRICTS, ALSO ECHOED THE SAME SENTIMENTS.

TO SUMMARIZE THE REPORTS, A LACK OF FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL EDUCATION PROHIBITS THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE MICRONESIAN POPULATION FROM MAKING AN INTELLIGENT CHOICE ON THE FUTURE STATUS ISSUE, WHETHER THE CHOICE BE INDEPENDENCE, COMMONWEALTH OR FREE ASSOCIATION. "MANY PEOPLE IN THE MARIANAS, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID THEY FAVORED COMMONWEALTH, BY WHICH THEY MEANT A CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES, BUT WITHOUT KNOWING ANY OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT STATUS, AND WITHOUT KNOWING HOW CLOSE AN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS CONTEMPLATED UNDER THE OTHER TWO ALTERNATIVES OR, IN FACT, UNDER A COMMONWEALTH STATUS FOR THAT MATTER," STATES THE WESTERN SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT. "THE SAME WAS GENERALLY TRUE FOR ADVOCATES OF FREE ASSOCIATION AND INDEPENDENCE."

IN THE EASTERN DISTRICTS OF TRUK, PONAPE AND THE MARSHALLS, HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THERE SEEMED TO BE NO CLEAR CONSENSUS FAVORING A PARTICULAR STATUS ALTERNATIVE, A FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED OPINION WAS THAT INDEPENDENCE WAS PREFERRED, IF IT SHOULD PROVE TO BE ECONOMICALLY PRACTICAL. "INTERESTINGLY," THE REPORT STATES, "SUPPORT FOR A CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES SEEMED TO BE BASED ON THE UNCERTAINTY WHICH WOULD ACCOMPANY INDEPENDENCE RATHER THAN ENTHUSIASM FOR A CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES."

THE REPORT SAYS THE APPARENT UNDERLYING FACTOR FOR THIS IS "...THE CONDITION OF DEPENDENCE WHICH NEARLY 30 YEARS OF AMERICAN ADMINISTERING AND SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS HAVE ENGENDERED." THOSE DISTRICTS PREFER INDEPENDENCE, SAYS THE REPORT, "...BUT ONLY IF (MICRONESIANS) CAN HAVE THEIR SCHOOLS, ROADS, HOSPITALS, AND OTHER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, GOVERNMENT JOBS, MEDICAL CARE AND EDUCATION TOO."

YET, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER MICRONESIA COULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES AD AN INDEPENDENT NATION WAS REPEATEDLY ASKED, BUT THIS AREA PROVED TO BE ONE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES SINCE THE SUBJECT OF FUTURE FINANCING HAS NOT YET BEEN RESOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.

HOWEVER, THE REPORT SAYS BEFORE THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN VARIOUS STATUS ALTERNATIVES THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE STATUS QUESTION AS WELL AS THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED MUST BE DISCUSSED DIRECTLY WITH THE PEOPLE.

TO ASSIST IN CONTINUING TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA TO BECOME MORE POLITICALLY AWARE, THE REPORTS RECOMMEND THE IMMEDIATE REACTIVATION OF THE POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMISSION AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA TO BALANCE REGULATION AND CONTROL OF THE NEWS MEDIA BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE TT GOVERNMENT. IN THIS VEIN, THE REPORTS STRONGLY DEPLORE CERTAIN ACTIONS OF THE OFFICE OF MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS IN WASHINGTON, WHICH HAD WITHHELD CERTAIN PORTIONS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION RADIO PROGRAMS INTENDED FOR DISSEMINATION IN MICRONESIA. CALLING THESE ACTIONS

"...SINISTER AND DEPLORABLE EFFORTS AT CENSORSHIP..."

THE SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS EMPHASIZE THAT GREAT CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT POLITICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS DO NOT DETERIORATE INTO PROPAGANDA EFFORTS DESIGNED TO MOLD PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOR OF ANY ONE PARTICULAR STATUS ALTERNATIVE, AND RECOMMEND THAT THE POLITICAL EDUCATION COMMISSION BE MADE THE SOLE JUDGE OF THE CONTENT OF SUCH PROGRAMS.

CONCERNING MICRONESIAN UNITY, THE REPORTS SAY CONTINUED UNITY WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF ALL THE DISTRICTS, AND SUGGEST "...A SUCCESSFUL COMPROMISE WHICH CAN BE EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE MARIANA ISLANDS AND AT THE SAME TIME GUARANTEE THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S 'FOUR PRINCIPLES' OF SELF-GOVERNMENT, CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE UNITED STATES."

"THE SUB-COMMITTEE BELIEVES THAT THERE ARE TWO ESSENTIAL PRE-REQUISITES TO A SUCCESSFUL COMPROMISE." STATES ONE OF THE REPORTS. "THAT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES BE A CLOSE AND ENDURING ONE, AND THAT ANY DISTRICT SHOULD HAVE THE OPTION TO RETAIN THE AGREEMENT IF AND WHEN OTHER DISTRICTS TERMINATE IT."

TO ATTAIN THIS, THE REPORTS RECOMMEND THAT THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF MICRONESIA BE ORGANIZED AS A LOOSE FEDERATION, WITH SEVERELY LIMITED POWERS IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN EACH DISTRICT, PARTICULARLY IN FISCAL MATTERS. THEY ALSO RECOMMEND THAT FUNDING SHOULD BE ALLOCATED ACCORDING TO POPULATION, THE LOCATION OF MILITARY FACILITIES, AND ON THE BASIS OF THE EQUALITY OF EACH DISTRICT. THE REPORTS STRONGLY DISAPPROVE OF ANY DISTRICT CONDUCTING SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES OR USING THREATS OF SECESSION TO GAIN POLITICAL LEVERAGE.

DURING THE MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICTS, CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE DRAFT COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION ALSO RECEIVED NEAR UNANIMOUS DISAPPROVAL. IT WAS FELT THAT SECTION 303 (C) OF THE COMPACT DOES NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECT MICRONESIAN LAND FROM POSSIBLE CONFISCATION BY THE U.S. MILITARY. THE REPORTS RECOMMEND THAT THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF MICRONESIA SHOULD NOT ONLY HAVE THE POWER TO GRANT, BUT ALSO THE POWER TO DENY ADDITIONAL LAND REQUESTS IF NECESSARY. THE REPORTS ALSO RECOMMEND LIMITATIONS TO THE PROPOSED AUTHORITY OF THE UNITED STATES CONCERNING FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE, SO THAT LEGITIMATE MICRONESIAN INTERESTS CAN BEST BE PROTECTED.

OPINIONS WERE ALSO HEARD IN THE EASTERN DISTRICTS CONCERNING THE CONTROVERSIAL LAW OF THE SEA ISSUE, AND THE REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT THE NECESSARY STEPS BE TAKEN TO ACQUIRE JURISDICTION OVER WATERS SURROUNDING THE ISLANDS OF MICRONESIA, DESPITE OPPOSITION FROM THE UNITED STATES ON THIS POINT.

ALSO RECOMMENDED IS THE INCLUSION OF LOCAL DISTRICT LEADERS AS ADVISORS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FUTURE STATUS TO BROADEN THE SPECTRUM OF INTERESTS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS.
(AMERICAN LAW OF SEA OFFICIAL HERE)

SAIPAN, JAN. 15 (MNS)---AN AMERICAN STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL WORKING ON THE UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAW OF THE SEA, BERNARD OXMAN, ARRIVED ON SAIPAN THIS WEEK FOR MEETINGS WITH THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON LAW OF THE SEA, CHAIRED BY SENATOR ANDON AMARAICH (TRUK).

OXMAN, WHO IS A POLICY ADVISOR TO THE LAW OF THE SEA TASK FORCE OF THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, WILL BE IN THE TRUST TERRITORY FOR ABOUT THREE DAYS TO TALK OVER MICRONESIA'S INTERESTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, WHICH WILL BE HELD THIS SUMMER IN CARACAS, VENEZUELA. THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA HAS A CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THIS CONFERENCE, AT WHICH THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WILL BE ATTEMPTING TO WORK OUT INTERNATIONAL FORMULAS FOR DEFINING AND PROTECTING NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE RESOURCES OF THE WORLD'S OCEANS.

"THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED TO THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIEWS OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TO THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE," OXMAN TOLD A NEWS REPORTER TUESDAY. HE INDICATED IT IS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION AS TO JUST HOW THESE VIEWS WILL BE PRESENTED, BUT THAT THIS IS ONE OF THE SUBJECTS HE WILL BE DISCUSSING HERE.

SENATOR AMARAICH SAID A MEETING OF HIS JOINT COMMITTEE WITH OXMAN HAS BEEN SET FOR ONE P.M. WEDNESDAY ON SAIPAN. THE SENATOR AND MARIANAS CONGRESSMAN HERMAN O. GUERRERO, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE, MET WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT ATTORNEY TUESDAY AFTERNOON.

IN COMMENTING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE THIS SUMMER, OXMAN NOTED THAT 149 NATIONS WILL PARTICIPATE. ONLY ONE COUNTRY, NORTH VIETNAM, DECLINED THE INVITATION TO TAKE PART. THE CONFERENCE IS BEING HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, ALTHOUGH NON-MEMBER STATES OF THE U.N. WILL ALSO BE INVOLVED.

(CALL USERS, PLEASE CREDIT THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)
(HENRY SPEAKS TO HEALTH COUNCIL)

SAIPAN-REPRESENTATIVES BETHWEL HENRY, SPEAKER OF THE MICRONESIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SPOKE TO THE TRUST TERRITORY HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL TUESDAY OF LONG RANGE PLANNING AND OBJECTIVES FOR HEALTH CARE IN MICRONESIA.

IN HIS SPEECH, WHICH MARKED THE OPENING OF THE COUNCIL'S FOUR DAY MEETING ON SAIPAN, SPEAKER HENRY COMMENDED THE COUNCIL FOR ITS EFFORTS IN REDUCING MEDICAL REFERRAL COST OF TRUST TERRITORY CITIZENS AT REFERRAL HOSPITALS ON GUAM AND HAWAII. REFERRING TO THE RECENT REDUCTION ON COSTS FROM \$126 PER DAY TO \$66 A DAY FOR SUCH REFERRALS, SPEAKER HENRY SAID: "THIS KIND OF EFFECTIVE EFFORT AND CONCERN CANNOT BE PRAISED TOO HIGHLY, AND I HOPE THIS COUNCIL CONTINUES ITS GOOD WORK IN THE FUTURE."

HENRY EXPLAINED TO THE COUNCIL THAT IN MANY COUNTRIES, SUCH AS MICRONESIA, WHICH ARE ATTEMPTING TO REACH A HIGHER LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS IN DEVELOPMENTAL PLANNING IS HEALTH CARE. "AFTER ALL," HE SAID, "HOW CAN PLANNERS EXPECT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIETY AND AN ECONOMY IF THE GENERAL POPULATION AND THE LABOR FORCE IN PARTICULAR ARE NOT GIVEN ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO THEIR HEALTH NEEDS?"

THE HOUSE SPEAKER INFORMED THE COUNCIL THE CONGRESS, TOO, WAS CONCERNED ABOUT MICRONESIA'S HEALTH NEEDS AND THAT MORE THAN TEN HEALTH RELATED MEASURES ARE NOW PENDING BEFORE THE FIFTH CONGRESS, WHICH CONVENED MONDAY ON SAIPAN. THESE MEASURES, HE SAID, RANGE FROM THE LICENSING OF NURSES TO DISABILITY COMPENSATION.

THE HOUSE SPEAKER ALSO INVITED THE COUNCIL TO OFFER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTION THAT COULD ASSIST THE CONGRESS IN ENACTING LEGISLATION TO IDENTIFY AND FACILITATE LONG RANGE PLANNING GOALS FOR MICRONESIA. HE SAID THE CONGRESS NEEDED THE COUNCIL'S INPUT ON MANY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE COST STAFFING, AND LOCATION OF NEW DISPENSARIES, ADEQUATE HEALTH STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES, OBJECTIVES FOR ADEQUATE PREVENTIVE MEDICINE, MENTAL HEALTH, IMMUNIZATION, DENTAL HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS, AND OTHER MATTERS.

"THESE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE THOROUGHLY EXAMINED AND ANSWERED," SAID HENRY. "ARMED WITH YOUR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, THE CONGRESS CAN ASSIST IN THE AREA OF HEALTH THROUGH LEGISLATION, THROUGH APPROPRIATION, THROUGH RESOLUTION, OR THROUGH FUTURE STUDY AND INVESTIGATION."