

Separatists Vocal At COM

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SAIPAN - Yesterday was a bleak day for those who still cling to the hope of a unified Micronesia.

In the space of four hours, Palau's Sen. Roman Tmetuchl underscored Micronesian cultural and political differences, not any similarities, as "the reality that is Micronesia today," and a delegation of Kusaians told the Congress of Micronesia, again, why their island's uniqueness dictates that it become a separate district.

Palau Rep. Polycarp Basilus made remarks similar to Tmetuchl's in the house. Just two days before, Sen. Andon Amaraich of Truk introduced a bill "to foster unity in Micronesia" by setting up a Micronesia Unity Commission and several exchange programs.

In another speech, Yap's Sen. John Mangefel told his colleagues to beware of "entangling alliances."

"Only we, as Micronesians," he said, "can know what is best for Micronesia" - giving weight to past observations that the only thing that has ever unified Micronesia is common suspicion of "Foreign rulers."

Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the leader of the U.S.

delegation to the Micronesian future status talks, was coincidentally on Saipan for meetings with Marianas and congress status officials, among them Tmetuchl's colleague Sen. Lazarus Sali of Palau.

Using the proposed Micronesia constitutional convention as a starting point, Tmetuchl presented the Palau congressional delegation's official position on "the minimum conditions" and terms it will insist upon in considering any integration of Palau District into a larger Micronesian legal and political entity.

"Like the other peoples of Micronesia," he said, "we Palauans have our own culture and language and our own unique economic and political history both past and present. It follows, therefore, that we also have our own particular needs and expectations for the future."

"We Micronesians should not close our eyes to these differences," Tmetuchl said, "because for us they represent the reality that is Micronesia today. Because of these differences, we Palauans find unrealistic and unacceptable the concept of a strong central government with the power to impose uniform laws or similar types of economic development upon all

members of this congress should be advised that Palau is moving carefully, but urgently, toward the assumption of its own sovereign status in the event that these standards and provisions are not met."

This stance, Tmetuchl said, comes because "we are increasingly alarmed as we see our way of life continually eroded, and our peace of mind destroyed by a foreign ruler

who is pursuing a course more consistent with its own interests than with our own.

"This is nowhere more apparent than the alarming fact that the United States has ignored the petition signed by almost all of our traditional and elected leaders asking America to keep the means of waging war out of our islands," Tmetuchl added, "we are therefore unwilling to delay, too long, the achievement of our own sovereign status while waiting upon the action of any other people, whether Micronesian or foreign."

After saying that Palauans believe their concerns and sense of urgency are shared by many congressmen and their constituents, Tmetuchl received a round of applause.

During an afternoon hearing into two house measures calling for Kusale to become a separate administrative district of the Trust Territory, there were fewer signs of willingness to overcome insular interests for the sake of unity.

Kusale, the fourth largest Micronesian island with a resident population of 4,000, is now part of the Ponape District. Speaking for a small Kusalean delegation, former Sen. Iroal Imael told the Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee that if Kusale is not

separated, it will be a "self-determination under, any type of government the Trust Territory is seeking in the future."

Separation would, in fact, he suggested, be a "strengthening factor" in the unity of Micronesia.

Dr. Imael said that with fuller participation in governing themselves, Kusaleans could contribute more to unity. Without it, the government would continue to work for the majority and Kusale, with a smaller population, within the Ponape district, "would naturally get the worst end," he said.

Imael said that Kusaleans voted overwhelmingly in favor of separate district status in a December referendum.

Rep. Joab Sigrah of Kusale indicated that the Kusaleans would like to separate before the trusteeship is ended.

J. Boyd Mackenzie, a special assistant to TT High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, said the administration has no objections to a separate Kusale, if that is what the Kusaleans want. He said the TT and the U.S. Interior Department have been studying the matter for several years.

The proposed bill and resolution under consideration are holdovers from last year's congress session.