

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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TRADITIONAL LEADERS MEET IN TRUK

"Micronesian Unity" was the theme this past week, as traditional leaders or their representatives from all six districts of the Trust Territory met in Truk for their second leadership conference. Attendance was highest from Truk and Ponape, but delegations were also present from Yap and Palau, and there were observers at the meeting from the Marshalls and the Marianas.

The week-long meeting was chaired by Fuchita Bossy, the Mayor of Moen. As the chiefs gathered in the auditorium of Truk High School, the walls were decorated with signs saying "Micronesian Unity" in each of the major languages of Micronesia. But despite this theme and the signs, there were many signs of disunity as the leaders moved through their heavy agenda.

The Conference opened with an address by High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, who said that during his tenure here he has gained "great respect" for the wisdom of Micronesia's traditional leaders. The HiCom said that, contrary to what many people believe, he does not think the traditions of Micronesia are dying. He said he thinks these traditions are being successfully passed on to the younger generation. The HiCom concluded his remarks by urging the chiefs to participate fully in the forthcoming Micronesian Constitutional Convention, which will only be a success, he said, "if the traditional leaders put a great effort into it."

Other speakers on the opening day included Chief Justice of the TT High Court Harold Burnett, Truk District Administrator Juan Sablan, Congress of Micronesia Senate President Tosiwo Nakayama and House Speaker Bethwel Henry.

President Nakayama told the chiefs that he believes the two systems of law in Micronesia, the traditional one and the new system of territorial laws represented by the Congress of Micronesia, can work well together.

Later in the week, Nakayama and Henry participated in lengthy discussions on unity in Micronesia. Speaker Henry told the chiefs that they should provide the direction for the rest of Micronesia to follow on how the future government of Micronesia should be set up.

In discussing the constitutional convention, the chiefs questioned the reasoning behind the action of the Congress in not giving a vote in the convention to the traditional delegates. It was explained that this was done to prevent the chiefs from being drawn into partisan, political

debates where they might be embarrassed. This reasoning did not satisfy the majority of delegates, who requested that the Congress of Micronesia take action during its next session to give traditional leadership delegates a vote in the ConCon.

Other issues which were discussed during the meeting were the return of public land, war claims and the education for self government program. Although unity was the theme, the lack of meaningful representation at the meeting from either the Marianas or the Marshalls gave evidence of the problems faced in achieving a unified Micronesia. No traditional leaders from the Marshalls attended, although a delegation had been expected. The two Marshallese who did attend in an official capacity, Tony DeBrum and Philip Kabua, made it clear that they were not there as representatives of the Marshallese traditional leadership. The Marianas representative, Judge Ignacio Benavente, also stated that he was not representing any sort of traditional leadership in the Marianas. In fact, he said there really is not any traditional leadership in his district, and that he was attending the conference only at the invitation of Moen Mayor Bossy.

A number of resolutions was expected to be adopted by the chiefs at the conclusion of their conference, but by week's end word of these had not been received on Saipan.

JUDGE BENAVENTE SPEAKS ON ESG PROGRAM

Marianas District Presiding Judge Ignacio Benavente was the guest last week on a program in the radio series "dialogue for Micronesia," produced by the Education for Self Government (ESG) Task Force. The judge was interviewed in Truk, where he was attending the traditional leadership conference.

Judge Benavente said the people of the Marianas have made up their minds to enter into a commonwealth status with the United States, and thus it is "not necessary" for them to participate in such things as the traditional leadership conference. He emphasized that it has been the desire of the people of the Marianas for a long time to join the American political family.

Asked about the public land issue, the Judge said the people of the Marianas are unwilling to sell their land to the U.S. military, but would be willing to lease it. The land question is thought to be the final major issue standing in the way of a commonwealth agreement between the U.S. and the Marianas. Judge Benavente also commented on the recent election in the Marianas, in which all four Congress of Micronesia incumbents, including Senator Edward Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, were defeated. He said the election did not, in his view, have anything to do with the military lands question. He expressed the opinion that the winners in the election were "perhaps more capable and popular leaders" for most of the people.

ELECTION RESULTS STILL AWAITED IN TRUK

Nearly two weeks after the November 5 Congress of Micronesia General Election, the winners in two important races in Truk District still are not known. The reason for the uncertainty is a delay in picking up the ballots from the outer islands of Truk and returning them to the district center for tabulation. In all of the other districts, ballots are counted locally and the results called into the district center by radio, but this is not done in Truk.

The races still undecided are the Senate contest between Senator Andon Amaraich and Nick Bossy, and a three-way race for the district 18 House seat between incumbent Masao Nakayama, Lambert Aafin and Masachiro Christlib. Also still not in are returns from district 15, but incumbent Raymond Setik is unopposed there.

The Senate race could still go either way, according to most observers. On the basis of returns from the islands in the Truk Lagoon, Bossy is leading Amaraich by a wide margin, nearly 2,500 votes. But Amaraich is expected to run strongest in the outer islands, where nearly 10,000 of Truk's 30,000 people live. Thus the final outcome is expected to be very close.

In the Marianas last week, there were demonstrations and protests by the leaders and supporters of the Popular Party, who lost three of the four races. Party officials charged that many "outsiders," that is, Micronesians from outside the Marianas, voted in the election and swung it to the candidates of the Territorial Party, who unseated three of the four incumbent members of the Congress of Micronesia. The only Popular Party winner was Herman R. Guerrero, who defeated Territory Party incumbent Pete P. Tenorio by just four votes. Formal protests, citing specific irregularities which the Popular Party claims were observed in the conduct of the election, were expected to be filed with the district administrator, and it seemed likely that a court case or formal objection to the Congress itself could be made in the Marianas election.

Also being closely watched is the effect of the election on the Marianas status negotiations. Two of the defeated candidates, Senator Edward Pangelinan and Representative Herman Q. Guerrero, are members of the commission, and Pangelinan is its chairman. Both men lose their seats by virtue of their election defeat. A round of status negotiations is tentatively set to take place beginning December 2 on Saipan, but it is not certain just how the two sides will now proceed in the wake of the surprising Territorial Party election showing.

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

The first annual meeting of managers of the six district fishing authorities was held on Saipan. Speakers included Deputy High Commissioner Peter T. Coleman and Sasauo Haruo, Chairman of the House Resources and Development Committee of the Congress of Micronesia.

Plans were announced for a meeting of the Pacific Conference of Legislators this week on Saipan. Members of the PCL include the district legislatures of the Marianas, Palau, Truk and Yap, and the legislatures of Guam, Hawaii

and American Samoa.

A lawsuit has been brought by Marianas District Judge Jesus Sonoda against Chief Justice Harold Burnett. The suit asks that Burnett be restrained from removing Sonoda from his appointive position on the bench. Sonoda has been a district judge since 1971.

A consultant in pediatrics from the South Pacific Commission, Dr. Anja Jiirananen, will arrive on Saipan this month to conduct studies on growth patterns of pre-school age children.

A new Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation has joined the staff of the Department of Health Services. He is Gene Cate, of Sacramento, California.

And finally, 4,000 pounds of school books and other items arrived on Saipan last week, donated by individuals and organizations in the United States under the U.S. Navy's Project Handclasp. The items were to be distributed to the schools on Saipan. It is the second time that Project Handclasp materials have been delivered to the Marianas.