

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
Prepared by Micronesian News Service

Saipan, Mariana Islands

Nov. 25-29, 1974

SECRETARIAL ORDER PLANNED FOR RETURN OF LAND

It was learned last week that the United States Government is preparing to issue an executive order, through the Secretary of the Interior, to return public land in Micronesia in accordance with the policy announced in November, 1973. The order was expected to be issued early in December, following a meeting in Hawaii involving American officials and a delegation of Micronesian leaders.

The planned action has run into some opposition, however, from the chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, Senator Lazarus Salii of Palau, who feels that the Congress of Micronesia should be given another chance to provide for the return of public land through legislation.

The Congress passed a bill, Senate Bill 296, earlier this year, but it was not acceptable to the administration, and was vetoed by the High Commissioner.

Senator Salii informed U.S. Ambassador Haydn Williams last week that the position of the joint committee continues to be that the legislative, rather than the executive, approach to return of public land is best. He also said that he had informed Williams in Hawaii in October that if the secretarial order was going to be issued, the joint committee wanted to participate in the drafting of it, and insisted on prior approval before it is issued.

The Senator also recommended that the proposed Hawaii meeting be changed to Saipan in view of the large number of Micronesian participants.

The Congress leadership asked the U.S. to delay the meeting for one week, in order for the Micronesians planning to take part to meet in Saipan, to work out a unified Micronesian position on the question. Senator Salii warned that there could be "serious consequences" for Micronesia's future relationship with the U.S., if the U.S. insists on bypassing the Congress of Micronesia on such a vital issue.

Late last week, Ambassador Williams responded to Salii's statement. He said the executive action to return public lands is being taken in response to earlier requests from the JCFS and the Congress of Micronesia, and that it will follow the policy statement issued a year ago, which, said Williams, had been "specifically endorsed" by the Joint Committee on Future Status.

Salii in return responded to that statement by saying that the joint committee still prefers legislative, rather than executive action, and still

insists on prior approval of any executive order. Further, said Salii, it is a "gross distortion" of the facts to say that the joint committee endorsed the American policy statement on return of public lands. The Senator said the committee was shown the statement only after it had been issued, and merely took note of its issuance. He accused the U.S. of trying to create division among Micronesia's leaders-trying to get the Congress of Micronesia and the districts to fight.

Meanwhile, Senate President Tosiwo Nakayama and House Speaker Bethwel Henry flew to Saipan last week to hold meetings on the land question, and they invited district legislature leaders to meet on Saipan this week for further discussions.

MARIANAS STATUS TALKS SET

Ambassador Haydn Williams and other members of the United States delegation were to arrive on Saipan early this week, for another round of negotiations on the future political status of the Mariana Islands District.

The talks were originally scheduled to begin Monday, December 2, but were later postponed to Thursday, the 5th. Some observers believe that this may be the final round of Marianas talks, with an agreement near on a covenant which would bring the Marianas into the American political family as a commonwealth. The talks are expected to last about two weeks.

AMARAICH, NAKAYAMA LOSE IN TRUK

The final results from Truk District, the last of the six districts to complete the counting of ballots from the November 5 Congress of Micronesia general election, show that Senator Andon Amaraich, a veteran member of the Congress, has been defeated. Also going down to defeat was Representative Masao Nakayama, the brother of Senate President Tosiwo Nakayama.

Senator Amaraich, whose campaign style is not to campaign at all, found himself facing his toughest challenge ever this year from district personnel officer Nick Bossy, who campaigned vigorously, especially in the Truk Lagoon. It was this hard work that paid off, as Amaraich ran very strong in the outer islands, but lost to Bossy by a wide margin in the lagoon. The final, unofficial, tally showed Bossy with 6,382 votes, to Senator Amaraich's 6,006, a difference of 376 votes. In the congressional race, Nakayama faced two opponents, Lambert Aafin and Masachiro Christlib. The final result was Aafin the winner, with 609 votes, to Nakayama's 451, with Christlib tallying 198. Thus in Truk District, every incumbent member of the Congress who faced opposition was defeated. Only Representatives Sasauo Haruo and Raymond Setik, who ran unopposed, were re-elected.

All in all, it was a bad year for incumbents in the Congress election. Of 21 House of Representatives members, all of whom ran for re-election, 11 were defeated. In addition, two of the six Senators up for re-election were beaten, making a total of 13 new members who will join the Sixth Congress of Micronesia when it meets next, in January, 1975 on Saipan.

EDLF BOARD RE-STATES LENDING POLICY

The Trust Territory's Economic Development Loan Fund (EDLF) Board met last week on Saipan, and voted to continue the established policy regarding loans--not more than 30 per cent of appropriated funds for commercial activities, 20 percent for agriculture, 20 percent for tourism-related ventures, and 30 percent for marine resources loans. The Board added that, because the 30 percent ceiling has already been reached on commercial loans, no more loans in excess of \$10,000 in this category will be considered until the amount of loans outstanding falls below the ceiling.

Loans under the amount of \$10,000 are the responsibility of the district economic development loan review boards, and do not come under the headquarters EDLF board for review.

The Board also voted to seek advice from the Congress of Micronesia as to how the Congress views the board's action, as well as the present allocation of funds with respect to the need for funding future developmental projects in the agriculture, marine resources and tourism sectors.

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

A request for a recount of ballots in the Marshall Islands race won by Carmen Milne Bigler was denied by Marshalls election commissioner. The recount had been asked by incumbent Congressman John Heine, who was defeated by Ms. Bigler, 729 to 372.

Members of the Micronesian Sports Council voted unanimously last week to have Micronesia participate in the next South Pacific Games, to be held on Guam in August, 1975. The board voted to field participants in track and field events, both men's and women's, men's volleyball, basketball, softball, men's and women's swimming, and golf, underwater fishing, and table tennis. Athletes from throughout Micronesia will train on Saipan for two months prior to the competition.

Five total hip replacement operations were performed last week at the district hospital in Truk, a medical "first" for the Trust Territory. Dr. Gaven Southerland of Ponape was assisted by the Truk hospital staff in performing the surgery.

Plaintiffs in the so-called Saipan Continental Hotel case have appealed to the U.S. supreme court to review lower court decisions in the case. The plaintiffs are ten Saipan residents who oppose the location of the hotel. They are represented by the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation.

Oshiro F. Masters, of Palau, has been named Manager of the Communications Operations Branch by Communications Chief Vic Borja. Masters has been employed in the communications field since 1953.

A doctor from the South Pacific Commission, Anja Niiranen, has begun measuring pre-school age children on Saipan, as part of a study of growth patterns of Micronesian children.

Truk Continental Hotel will be the site this month of the district attorneys conference, to be attended by all six district attorneys and officials from the headquarters Attorney General's Office.

And finally, Public Information Division Chief Bonifacio Basilius announced last week the appointment of Francisco S. Rosario of Saipan as the new chief of the Micronesian News Service. Rosario replaces Jon A. Anderson, bureau chief for the past four years, who will leave Saipan in mid-December for Washington, D.C, and a position with the Voice of America. Basilius also announced the appointment of Derson Ramon of Ponape as a new public information specialist on the staff of the division, and as assistant editor of the quarterly magazine, Micronesian Reporter.