

From Micronesian Reporter, 4th Quarter 1973
distributed Feb. 25, 1974

Status Update

by Jon Anderson, Bureau Chief, Micronesian News Service

Washington, D.C., in November is usually cold and often rainy; not a very hospitable place for a dozen Micronesians from the tropical Trust Territory. Yet there they were last fall, the members of the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Future Status, bundled in overcoats against a chill wind as they walked from the Roger Smith Hotel, where they caucused, to the Department of Interior building, where they met with their American counterparts in another round of negotiations on the future political status of these islands. This was Round Seven, or perhaps Round Five if you prefer, as some do, to begin counting only from the point where free association became a live option.

Five or seven, this most recent round of talks was also one of the shortest, although it wasn't planned that way. When it was all over one wag suggested it might have been the cold weather that made the Micronesians want to return home in a hurry. Not likely. The issues that proved to be insurmountable in the days just before Thanksgiving were considerably more substantive.

The talks began on a high note. A week before, the United States had issued its long-awaited policy statement on public land in Micronesia. It seemed to fulfill all of the requirements laid down by the Micronesians for resumption of the status negotiations. Public land *will* be returned to the people of Micronesia, and it will be returned before, not after, the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement.

"...If it is the desire of the people in a district that public lands in that district be turned over to the district now before the termination of the Trusteeship, the United States is willing to accede to their wishes and to facilitate the transfer of title," the policy states. The only restrictions placed on this transfer are certain safeguards designed to protect "...those individuals who have acquired property interests in public lands under the Trusteeship and to meet the continuing land needs of the Trust Territory Government for public use." The policy statement goes on to say these limitations and safeguards "...will apply until the Trusteeship ends, at which time the new government will be free to modify them as it chooses."

It is a far-reaching policy. "Public lands" are defined as "all lands acquired by the prior Spanish, German, and Japanese administrations for governmental or other public purposes as well as such lands as the Trust Territory Government may itself have acquired for public purposes." The term also encompasses tide-lands and marine lands, and "those private Japanese properties, including those of the Japanese Government controlled agencies and corporations, which were seized at the end of World War Two and

placed under control of an 'alien property custodian'." It is easy to understand Micronesian concern with the return of these public lands when one considers the following figures. In the Marianas, 90 per cent of the total land area is classified or administered as public land. In Palau it is 68 per cent; in Ponape, 66 per cent; in Truk, 17 per cent; in the Marshalls, 13 per cent; and in Yap, 4 per cent.

Reaction to the policy paper in the Trust Territory was, not surprisingly, generally positive from Americans and Micronesians alike. "Long overdue," seemed to be the most frequent comment. It remained only for the Joint Committee on Future Status to make some sort of gesture of approval. To assist in its evaluation, a delegation of leaders from Palau, the district that had pushed the public land issue most strongly, went along to Washington. Although concerned about some particulars, the Palauans generally agreed with the policy, and the Joint Committee accordingly gave its approval as well, subject to certain clarifications and modifications which were made a part of the record. The stage was thus set for the resumption of formal negotiations, after an hiatus that had lasted more than a year.

The talks officially began November 14, a Wednesday. Senator Sali and United States Ambassador F. Haydn Williams delivered the customary opening statements, full of hope and promise. The two sides then settled into what most observers expected would be a long working session, tackling the nitty-gritty of remaining titles of a draft compact of free association, principally those sections dealing with finance and termination. The best guess seemed to be that the talks would go on until at least the end of November.

By Friday, however, just two short days after the round opened, it had become apparent that another stumbling block had been reached. There were a few mumblings about "packing our bags" from some members of the Micronesian group, and long caucuses were held. The issue was money, and it was evident the two sides were far apart on an annual support figure to be pledged the future Micronesian government by the United States. A Micronesian News Service dispatch from Washington on that day quoted Senator Lazarus Sali as saying: "There has been very little change in the position of either side since the last time we talked of this question. The Micronesians are still talking in terms of one hundred-million dollars. The American delegation still considers this figure too high but has not really given any firm counter proposal." When asked whether he thought the two sides could reach agreement on the question, the Senator replied: "I am really not sure."

As it turned out, they did not. The American delegation wanted very much to see the talks continue, and they proposed setting aside the financial question for a time to work on other things, coming back to the money matter later in the month. Such an effort would be "an exercise in futility" without an agreement on the finance question, the Senator from Palau replied. Alternative proposals offered by the Micronesian side, involving re-opening of already completed portions of the draft compact for further negotiations as a means of keeping the talks going proved unacceptable to the American side, and so the impasse remained.

Finally on Wednesday, November 21, barely one week after the talks had opened, efforts to find a compromise that would enable them to continue were abandoned. Once again the two delegations gathered in the plush conference room at Interior to face each other across the huge, coffin-shaped table. This time the remarks of the two chairmen were less predictable, and less promising.

Citing the Micronesian request for an overall funding level of one hundred-million dollars annually for the first ten years, plus continuation of existing U.S. Federal programs, and a U.S. proposal in the neighborhood of forty to forty-one-million dollars annually plus the continued services of the FAA, the Postal Service, and the weather service, Senator Salii commented:

"Since these respective propositions have been advanced the United States delegation has been unwilling to make any significant improvement in its offer. We, on the other hand, have been willing to reduce our request by 20-million dollars annually and to accept a significant diminution in the federal programs to be offered without compensation subsequent to termination of the Trusteeship.

"Because of this wide gap and the apparently unyielding stance of your delegation, we have had to conclude that we cannot usefully proceed with the discussions of the remaining sections of a compact of free association until this gap is substantially narrowed..."

The Senator expressed the hope that the United States delegation would "make some key decisions" with regard to its position, and present a new proposal to the joint committee more in line with the Micronesian request. Otherwise, he warned, "it will be the responsibility of the committee to advise the Congress (of Micronesia) that the talks on free association have proven to be unproductive and that some other course should now be considered."

Replying to the Senator, Ambassador Williams also adopted a tough stance, but one that nonetheless

contained some hope for an eventual agreement on the issue. Contradicting Senator Salii, the Ambassador, in summarizing the U.S. position on finance, stated that the American proposal totalled \$43-million for *five* districts, a figure, in his words, "considerably higher proportionately than the figure of \$40-41-million for six districts appearing in (Senator Salii's) statement..."

"In summary," said Williams, "we considered our proposal when viewed against the level of current operations, projected need and potential sources of income, to be fair and reasonable. Our guarantee of continuing basic support at approximately the current level of support, plus the prospects of additional income (from Micronesian sources) would have, we believe, provided for steady forward progress in government services, and a gradual movement toward greater economic self-sufficiency and economic independence.

"Conversely, the latest Joint Committee on Future Status proposal still totals, by our calculation, in the neighborhood of one hundred-million dollars annually for six districts including federal services, programs and loans. We believe this would lead Micronesia to greater and greater dependency and away from its stated goal of self-sufficiency. We feel that the figures you presented and the justification are unconvincing...It seems to us, on the face of it, unrealistic to suppose that once a territory sheds its trustee status that the measure of assistance from the former Administering Authority should be greatly in excess of the annual level of support provided during the period of trusteeship itself."

The Ambassador closed his remarks by noting that, while disappointed, he does not despair for the future of the talks. Problems in the past have been overcome, he noted, and this problem will undoubtedly also prove to be one on which the two sides can eventually reach agreement. Senator Salii has also stated, in interviews and meetings since returning to Saipan from Washington, that he feels the talks can go forward in 1974. Following a meeting with the Ambassador in December, in fact, he announced that technical level working sessions will resume early in the year in an effort to iron out the differences on finance and lay the groundwork for an early resumption of the talks.

Much depends on what happens on Saipan during the 1974 session of the Congress of Micronesia, which will be well under way by the time this magazine reaches most of its readers. The United States has agreed to provide \$450,000 toward the costs of a Micronesian Constitutional Convention, thus virtually assuring that this important gathering will take place soon. And there is likely to be further discussion

during the session on the course the talks are taking, with possible additional guidance from the Congress to its negotiating committee. A report like this must, of necessity, remain incomplete, covering as it does only a three-month period, a small part of the ongoing story of future status in Micronesia.

There is another portion of that story that must be given separate treatment, though, and that is the separate Marianas status talks. Here, too, there was much development during the quarter. Following the May/June second round on Saipan that had seen the outline of a U.S. offer of commonwealth status to the Northern Marianas as well as disclosure of plans for a major military installation on Tinian, the Third Round of talks, also held on Saipan, in December, made still more progress toward an agreement that will inevitably separate the Marianas from the rest of the territory.

Departing from the briefer and less technical format of past joint communiques, the statement issued at the conclusion of the talks by Ambassador Williams and Senator Edward DLG. Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, was filled with indications of substantial progress toward a final agreement. The document is lengthy, but its major points were summarized by Williams in his closing statement:

“The major accomplishments of this third session have been (1) a number of important understandings on complex constitutional, legal and fiscal matters—including citizenship and nationality, the applicability of federal law, the protection of the right of local self-government, and customs and internal revenue; (2) agreement to establish forthwith an Ad Hoc Preparatory Committee to prepare a detailed work plan, timetable, organizational structure, and budget for transition planning, in recognition of the critical importance of such advance planning to ensure the orderly assumption of responsibility by a new government of the Marianas following the adoption of a local constitution; (3) an examination of the pace and direction in which the economy of the Marianas is likely to develop and the opportunity this presented for the U.S. to present a specific proposal of U.S. financial assistance during the first five years following the installation of your new government—a proposal which is, I believe, commensurate with (Marianas) requirements and relevant to (their) principle economic goals of a steadily rising standard of living for (their) people and ultimate self-sufficiency; and (4) an exploration of such questions relating to land in the Marianas as the recent U.S. policy decision to return public land to local control and the related intensified land cadaster program; and U.S. land needs in these islands.”

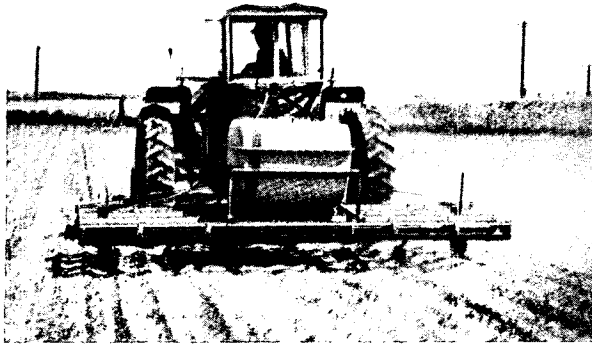
Ambassador Williams said the U.S. welcomed Marianas' expressions of understanding of U.S. military land requirements, and general agreement to accommodate them. He also said a fairly extensive understanding was reached during the December talks as to how the land needs in question can be satisfied.

This was not spelled out in detail in the joint communique, and remains the most obvious problem area yet to be covered by the Marianas negotiators. But judging from the general tone and from specific expressions from both sides in December, there are few real difficulties remaining to a final agreement. The people of the Marianas are well on their way toward becoming Americans—either nationals or citizens—with all of the rights and responsibilities that status implies.

Many members of the Congress of Micronesia from the other districts still have not fully reconciled themselves to the fact of Marianas separation. Some still retain a faint hope for maintaining the six-district unity of Micronesia. That would seem to be increasingly unrealistic, and possibly self-deceiving. For better or worse, Saipan, Tinian, Rota and the other islands of the Northern Marianas are going their separate way, and the remaining five districts must look within and among themselves to find their own future direction.

One final development from the quarter worth mentioning is creation of a new effort at political education. Following literally hundreds of indications from people at hearings throughout the territory this summer that they want more information, and the inevitable recognition that the political education efforts of the past have been largely ineffectual, the High Commissioner, after consultation with U.S. and Micronesian status leaders in Hawaii in October, announced a new program, with a new name: “Education for Self-Government.”

This observer of some three years of political status activity in Micronesia would like to hazard a prediction: That 1974 will be one of the most significant years yet in the drive toward self-government in the Trust Territory. It is still too soon to predict a date for the end of the Trusteeship Agreement. But by the end of this year the five districts may have a constitution and the framework of their future central government laid out, the Marianas may successfully conclude their negotiations toward a commonwealth arrangement with the U.S., and the draft compact of free association for the other districts may be complete, or nearly so. If even one of these things occurs, 1974 will be an important year indeed, and all three are distinct possibilities.



The subsistence farmer with his dry-land taro in the Marianas; the highly mechanized commercial-scale farmer in the United States.



Commercial or Subsistence? Which One?

by Bermin Weilbacher

Many statements have been made about the terms "commercial" or "subsistence" agriculture. What do they mean? Which one of these definitions fits your own?

Commercial agriculture is mechanized farming on large land masses. The end result is profit.

Subsistence agriculture is farming on little plots of land, without the use of machinery or technology, for family needs; if there's a surplus, it's sold for extra income.

My definition of the two terms are as follows:

Commercial agriculture: Developing one's agriculture resources solely for a cash income. Any surplus is discarded or consumed by the family.

Subsistence agriculture: Developing one's agricultural resources for self-sufficiency. Any surplus is sold or consumed by the family.

To put it another way, commercial agriculture is *full-time* farming. Subsistence agriculture is *part-time* farming.

DRAFT:RYS:kke:2-25-74

TITLE: Joint Secretariat for Mariana Islands Transition

MEMBERSHIP:

Director, Marianan (Saipan)

Deputy Director, Marianan (Rotanese)

Economic Adviser, U.S. Citizen

PURPOSE: To ensure that the designated transition studies and research projects are conducted in accordance with the timetable prescribed by the Joint Commission and within prescribed budgetary limits.

FUNCTIONS:

1. Responsible to the Joint Commission for planning, implementing and coordinating all designated transition phase studies and research activities.
2. Second as necessary the expert advice and services of advisors from the U.S. Government, the Trust Territory Government and the Marianas District Administration.
3. Hire, as necessary, private consultants to conduct research and prepare reports on transition programs where such capability does not exist in government sector.
4. Contract out to private firms, as necessary, research and planning activities related to transition.
5. Submit periodic progress reports (not less than quarterly) to the Joint Consultative Commission.
6. Make quarterly recommendations to Joint Consultative Commission on adequacy of funds to carry out transition program.
7. Call upon Joint Consultative Commission to arbitrate differences within the Joint Secretariat and between the Joint Secretariat and governmental agencies.

ADMINISTRATION:

1. Joint Secretariat will be headquartered in Saipan.
2. Disbursement and accounting of funds will be handled by Trust Territory Headquarters. (See budget section for details).
3. A clerical staff and other logistics will be provided for in Joint Secretariat budget.