

Nitijela Adopts Separatist Role

MAJURO (MNS)—The Marshall Islands District Legislature, the Nitijela, has adopted a resolution informing the United Nations that it is unwilling to be a member of the political family of Micronesia after termination of the present trusteeship agreement and that the district intends to negotiate separately with the United States on the political future of the Marshalls.

The resolution was introduced by 14 of the 24 members of the Nitijela and adopted this week, the second of the legislature's current 30-day regular session in Majuro.

An earlier report from the Nitijela indicated political status is the major topic for discussion and legislation this session, with the separatist movement being strongly advocated in the wake of Congress of Micronesia's refusal to enact revenue-sharing tax legislation sought by the Marshalls District.

A Public Affairs Department spokesman in Majuro said the Nitijela also has acted during this session to reduce the number of members on its political status commission from 18 to eight, making the group smaller for economy of travel and efficiency in deliberations.

Under the new proposed amendment two members of the commission would be appointed by the district administrator, two would come from the district's Congress of Micronesia delegation and four would be selected from among the membership of the Nitijela by the

speaker. This group would conduct any separate Marshalls status negotiations with the United States.

If and when the Marshalls talks get under way, they would be the third set of Micronesian status negotiations. Talks are continuing with the Joint Committee on Future Status, the official negotiating body of the Congress of Micronesia, which takes the position that it is the only body authorized to negotiate on behalf of all six districts of the TT.

Meanwhile, the United States also is negotiating with the Marianas Islands District in separate talks begun a year ago and cited by the Marshallese as a precedent for their own separatist desires.

The Nitijela resolution points out that separate negotiations "will commence shortly" between the Marshalls status commission and U.S. representatives, that the Nitijela would welcome participation and advice from appropriate bodies of the United Nations and that the Nitijela believes UN participation might "enhance its position."

The measure declares that the Nitijela is informing the United Nations, through the secretary general, of "the desire of the Marshalls District to negotiate separately on the future political status of the Marshalls with the U.S. government," and that "the Marshall Islands District is unwilling or unable to be a member of the political family of Micronesia after the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement."