

EDUCATION FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT: Status and Prognosis

Background

Five months have passed since the Honolulu meeting of principals from the TTPI, COM, DOTA and OMSN which fixed responsibility for political education in the Trust Territory with the office of the High Commissioner. In that period, the TTPI has pulled together elements of a political education program under the title "Education for Self-Government". Though formally launched by the HICOM on January 25, this program has yet to progress beyond the stage of trial and error and continues to suffer from the lack of a long-term plan detailing objectives and program substance. ESG programming has thus far included the broadcast of a 14-part radio series which attempted to discuss status alternatives in an objective manner but depended heavily on the dubious accuracy of local translations; brochures based on the radio series; an essay on the "general subject of Education for Self-Government"; and the circulation of a status questionnaire to some 1700 persons territory-wide, which merely asks the respondent to indicate his degree of knowledge of the four status alternatives with a check mark.

It is highly questionable that the limited data that may be produced from this questionnaire will produce any facts not already well known to the TTPI and the Congress of Micronesia, i.e., there is a very low level of popular understanding of status alternatives. Unfortunately, the questionnaire project appears to be the foundation on which the HICOM's Task Force on ESG is planning to base its future program planning.

In the meantime, the Task Force on ESG has recently announced that it is shelving new projects for the immediate future to concentrate on

explanation and discussion of the proposed constitutional convention. These efforts will involve broadcast discussions by the HICOM and members of the COM about the importance of the convention and its implications for the political future of the TTPI. At this time, there is no indication of how long the Task Force's full attention will be turned to this question.

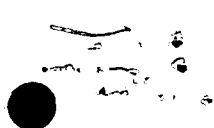
Congress of Micronesia and Political Education

The COM's role in political education remains somewhat vague. At the Honolulu meeting which turned responsibility for PE over to the TTPI administration, the HICOM indicated that he would solicit the support and cooperation of the COM. The Congressional role defined at that meeting would therefore not extend beyond an advisory nature, and would also depend largely on the activation of the COM's Political Education Commission.

That commission has been moribund since its conception and during the recent COM session, the Congress once again failed to appoint a membership for the body. It appears that the commission will continue to be an inoperative non-body into the foreseeable future.

What little Congressional attention there was focused on political education in the past session took the form of two joint resolutions, one of them introduced by Baily Oiter, that directed the JCFS to inter alia suspend negotiations with the United States until a PE program had been implemented. Neither resolution was passed by the Congress.

While the COM is undoubtedly aware of and sensitive to the need for a serious political education effort -- the district hearings held in July, 1973, demonstrated the general lack of popular awareness of the status alternatives and brought the COM under fire for not having done enough in the area of political education -- its leaders still seem pre-occupied with other issues or are otherwise unable to focus on the question.



Recommendation

It is apparent that Chairman Salii is mistrustful of OMSN involvement in TTPI political education efforts and he may not wish to discuss this question with us. However, if the general tone of your discussions on other status questions is positive, at the end of the agenda you may wish to review with Salii political education efforts to date and ask him for his assessment of the programs' effectiveness in the districts. You may also wish to ask Salii what plans the COM has with regard to the activation of its own Political Education Commission.