

(HOUSE ADJOURNS ABRUPTLY)

SAIPAN, MARCH 3 (MNS) --- THE SUNDAY AFTERNOON (MARCH 3) MEETINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ENDED ABRUPTLY, AND WITHOUT REACHING THE BILL CALENDAR, IN A DISPUTE OVER THE CONTROVERSIAL REVENUE SHARING BILL. THE FAILURE OF THE HOUSE TO ACT ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT MEASURES RAISED DOUBTS AMONG OBSERVERS OVER WHETHER THE BILLS WILL BE PASSED DURING THE CURRENT SESSION OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA, SINCE THERE IS ONLY ONE DAY REMAINING BEFORE THE SESSION MUST END.

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THE BILL WHICH CAUSED THE DISPUTE IS ONE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE RETURN OF FIFTY PER CENT OF REVENUE COLLECTED UNDER THE MICRONESIAN INCOME TAX LAW TO THE DISTRICTS (HB 229). PRESENTLY ALL SUCH FUNDS GO INTO THE GENERAL FUND OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA FOR APPROPRIATION, AND THOSE DISTRICTS WHICH GENERATE THE MOST TAX REVENUE, PARTICULARLY THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, ARE STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE REVENUE SHARING PROPOSAL.

THE FORCES ATTEMPTING TO GET THE BILL PASSED ARE LED BY REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES DOMNICK (MARSHALLS), WHO FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS HAS BEEN TRYING TO GET THE CONGRESS TO PASS SOME FORM OF THE MEASURE. HE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING THE BILL PLACED ON THE CALENDAR FOR FIRST READING, WHICH IT PASSED, IT RAN INTO TROUBLE.

YAP CONGRESSMAN LUKE THAN MOVED TO DEFER ACTION ON THE BILL UNTIL THE END OF THE DAY'S CALENDAR, SAYING IT WAS LIKELY TO GENERATE A LENGTHY DEBATE. REPRESENTATIVE SASAUO HARUO (TRUK) MADE A MOTION TO VOTE IN SECRET BALLOT, WHICH CARRIED, MAKING THE THIRD SECRET VOTE IN AS MANY DAYS IN THE HOUSE. THE RESULT WAS TEN IN FAVOR OF PLACING THE BILL AT THE END OF THE CALENDAR, AND NINE AGAINST, BUT SUPPORTERS OF REVENUE SHARING SAW THE MOVE AS SIMPLY A PARLIAMENTARY WAY TO DELAY ACTION ON THE BILL UNTIL IT WOULD NOT HAVE ANY CHANCE OF PASSAGE DURING THIS SESSION. WITH ONLY ONE DAY REMAINING, IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE UNDER THE RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR ANY LEGISLATION FROM ONE HOUSE TO PASS TWO READINGS IN THE OTHER, SINCE THE READINGS MUST COME ON SEPARATE DAYS.

CONGRESSMAN DOMNICK TOOK THE FLOOR TO EXPRESS HIS GRATITUDE TO THOSE DELEGATIONS WHICH HAVE SUPPORTED REVENUE SHARING, AND TO DECLARE ANGRILY TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SUPPORTED THE MEASURE THAT: "YOU HAVE MADE UP OUR MIND, AND I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU." HIS REFERENCE WAS APPARENTLY TO THE FREQUENTLY-REPEATED THREAT FROM THE MARSHALLS TO SEEK SEPARATE STATUS NEGOTIATIONS UNLESS REVENUE SHARING WAS APPROVED.

DOMNICK'S REMARKS WERE STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY REPRESENTATIVE ATAJI BALOS (MARSHALLS), WHO ADDED: "IT IS SAD TO SEE THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TURN DOWN THE DESIRES AND WISHES OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS..."

ANOTHER MARSHALLS CONGRESSMAN, JOHN HEINE, SAID "WE HAVE WITNESSED A VERY SERIOUS DECISION," AND "IT IS A VERY SAD AND BAD EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF THE MARSHALLS..." HE SAID THE SEPARATE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE MARSHALLS IS MOVING WILL BE A "DRASTIC" ONE.

THE FOURTH MEMBER OF THE MARSHALLS DELEGATION, FLOOR LEADER EYAP SILK, ALSO SPOKE, THANKING THOSE MEMBERS--PRIMARILY FROM THE MARIANAS AND PALAU--WHO HAVE SUPPORTED REVENUE SHARING.

CONGRESSMAN RAYMOND SETLY (TRUK) THEN MOVED TO RECESS THE HOUSE UNTIL 1:00 P.M. TODAY, THE FINAL DAY OF THE SESSION. SPEAKER BETHNEL HENRY POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD MEAN SEVERAL MEASURES WILL NOT BE ACTED UPON THIS SESSION, SINCE THE CONGRESSMEN HAD NOT REACHED THEIR BILL CALENDAR FOR THE DAY. CONGRESSMAN LUKE THAN (YAP) THEN URGED A RECESS UNTIL LATER SUNDAY AFTERNOON INSTEAD. THE MOTION TO ADJOURN UNTIL MONDAY CARRIED, HOWEVER.

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SOME OBSERVERS FEEL THIS ACTION, OR INACTION, BY THE HOUSE WILL MEAN A FAIRLY SHORT SESSION ON THE FINAL DAY, WITH MOST BILLS, INCLUDING SUCH IMPORTANT MEASURES AS THE BILL TO FACILITATE THE RETURN OF PUBLIC LAND TO THE DISTRICTS, AND THE BILL TO MAKE KUSAIE A SEPARATE DISTRICT, DEAD AS FAR AS FINAL ACTION DURING THIS SESSION IS CONCERNED.

(SUNDAY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION)

SAIPAN, MARCH 3 (MNS)---BOTH HOUSES OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA MET SUNDAY (MARCH 3), THE 49TH DAY OF THE 50-DAY SESSION. BUT WHAT IS NORMALLY A VERY BUSY LEGISLATIVE DAY, AS MEASURES ARE PREPARED FOR FINAL ACTION, TURNED INSTEAD INTO A RATHER BRIEF MEETING WHEN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BECAME INVOLVED IN THE PARLIAMENTARY FIGHT OVER A CONTROVERSIAL BILL, AND ADJOURNED UNTIL MONDAY WITHOUT TAKING ACTION ON THE MEASURES ON THE BILL CALENDAR (SEE PREVIOUS STORY).

THE CONGRESSMEN DID ADOPT ONE JOINT RESOLUTION, A MEASURE WELCOMING PAPAU NEW GUINEA DIPLOMAT RALPH KAREPA TO MICRONESIA. BUT THE MEASURE WAS ADOPTED BY A SPECIAL MOTION THAT PLACED IT AS THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS, AND OTHER RESOLUTIONS ON THE SUNDAY CALENDAR ALSO WERE LEFT WITHOUT ACTION WHEN THE HOUSE ADJOURNED IN A DISPUTE OVER REVENUE SHARING. THE ONLY OTHER ACTIVITY WAS AN ADDRESS BY CONGRESS POLYCARP BASILIUS (PALAU), COMMENDING THE WORK OF HIGH COMMISSIONER EDWARD E. JOHNSTON (SEE FOLLWING STORY).

THE SENATE SUNDAY WAS NOT PLAGUED WITH THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH PREVENTED THE HOUSE FROM GETTING TO ITS BILL CALENDAR, AND THE SENATORS MOVED SWIFTLY THROUGH SEVERAL PIECES OF LEGISLATION, INCLUDING FOUR BILLS WHICH NOW ARE ON THEIR WAY TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER. THEY BRING TO TWENTY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BILLS PASSED DURING THIS SESSION, WITH ONE MORE LEGISLATIVE DAY REMAINING.

THREE OF THE FOUR ARE APPROPRIATION MEASURES. THEY ARE: AN APPROPRIATION OF \$42,320 FOR THE OPERATING AND CONTINGENT EXPENSES OF THE TRUST TERRITORY PERSONNEL BOARD AND CONTINGENT FISCAL YEAR (HB 215); AN APPROPRIATION OF \$144,178 FOR THE OPERATION OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE (HB 227); AND AN APPROPRIATION OF \$225,800 FOR THE EXPENSES OF OPERATING THE REVENUE DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE, WHICH ADMINISTERS THE TAX LAWS WHICH PROVIDE THE REVENUES FOR THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA (HB 240).

THE FOURTH BILL PASSED AND SENT TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IS ONE WHICH CORRECTS A MINOR ERROR IN THE TRUST TERRITORY CODE WHICH HAS HAD THE EFFECT OF MAKING A SMALL PORTION OF ONE ATOLL IN THE MARSHALLS, MILI ATOLL, TECHNICALLY OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS DISTRICT (HB 16).

IN OTHER FINAL ACTION SUNDAY, THE SENATORS PASSED TWO OTHER BILLS AND SENT THEM TO THE HOUSE FOR FURTHER ACTION, AND ADOPTED FOUR JOINT RESOLUTIONS. THE BILLS ARE: A BILL APPROPRIATING \$22,300 AS A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE REVENUE DIVISION FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR (HB 244); AND A BILL THAT WOULD AMEND THE TRUST TERRITORY CODE TO EXEMPT UNITED STATES CITIZENS FROM THE MICRONESIAN INCOME TAX PROVIDED THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS MAKE PROVISION TO HAVE THE U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX PAID BY AMERICAN CITIZENS WORKING IN MICRONESIA PAID INTO THE GENERAL FUND OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA

(SS 4).

THE JOINT RESOLUTIONS APPROVED INCLUDE A MEASURE REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO APPROPRIATE ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COVER CERTAIN DEFICIENCIES AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS DURING FISCAL YEAR 1974 (HJR 87); A RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE TRUST TERRITORY ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BOARD OF TWO OF ITS MEMBERS, GILBERT

C. ADA OF THE MARIANAS, AND MOSES SAMUEL OF THE MARSHALLS (SJR 109): A MEASURE REQUESTING THE SECRETARIES OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR AND DEFENSE TO REQUIRE THE PAYMENT OF ADEQUATE WAGES TO MICRONESIANS EMPLOYED AT THE KWAJALEIN MISSILE RANGE IN THE PRIMARY LOGISTICAL SUPPORT CONTRACT TO BE AWARDED IN OCTOBER OF THIS YEAR (SJR 112): AND MEASURE URGING THE UNITED STATES TO CLEAN UP THE SO-CALLED PUBLIC LANDS IN MICRONESIA AND RETURN THEM TO THE CONDITION THEY WERE IN BEFORE THEY WERE TAKEN FROM THEIR OWNERS, BEFORE THEY ARE RETURNED (SJR 113).

ALSO ON THE CALENDAR FOR APPROVAL OF THE SENATE SUNDAY WAS A BILL, AMENDED BY THE HOUSE, RELATING TO THE TRUST TERRITORY MERIT SYSTEM (SB 152). HOWEVER, THE SENATORS OBJECTED TO CERTAIN CHANGES MADE IN THE MEASURE BY THE HOUSE, AND A CONFERENCE WAS REQUESTED. PRESIDENT TOSIWO NAKAYAMA NAMED THE MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT THE SENATE ON THAT COMMITTEE.

BOTH HOUSES OF THE CONGRESS ARE IN ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 1:00 P.M. MONDAY AFTERNOON, THE FINAL DAY OF THE SESSION. JUST HOW MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED MONDAY REMAINS IN SOME DOUBT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE SUDDEN ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON SUNDAY PLACED NUMEROUS IMPORTANT BILLS IN JEOPARDY. THE SESSION MUST BY STATUTE END ON OR BEFORE MIDNIGHT MONDAY NIGHT, UNLESS EXTENDED BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IN A SPECIAL SESSION.

(ALL USERS PLEASE CREDIT THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA)
(BASILIUS PRAISES HICOM)

SAIPAN, MARCH 3 (CONGRESS RELEASE)---REPRESENTATIVE POLYCARP BASILIUS OF PALAU OFFERED WORDS OF PRAISE TO TRUST TERRITORY HIGH COMMISSIONER EDWARD E. JOHNSTON DURING SUNDAY'S SESSION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

COMMENDING JOHNSTON FOR HIS "HONESTY AND HIS ABILITY TO WORK WITH MICRONESIANS" DURING HIS FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE TERRITORY, BASILIUS SAID DESPITE PROBLEMS THAT STILL CONFRONT THE ISLANDS, THE HICOM HAS DEMONSTRATED A WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN TO AND COOPERATE WITH MICRONESIANS."

BASILIUS NOTED MR. JOHNSTON HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED REQUESTS THAT THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA ASSUME AUTHORITY TO ALLOCATE U.S. GRANT FUND APPROPRIATION AS IT SEES FIT, AND THAT JOHNSTON HAS "GONE TO BAT" FOR MICRONESIA TO SEE THAT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS COULD BE ADEQUATELY FUNDED. CITING OTHER EXAMPLES, BASILIUS SAID THAT HICOM HAS SUPPORTED ESTABLISHMENT OF KUSAIE AS A SEPARATE DISTRICT, AND SUPPORTED CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE SHIPPING PROBLEM.

"HIS JOB IS NOT AN EASY ONE, AND I DOUBT THAT THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD ENVY HIM," BASILIUS SAID. "NOT ONLY DOES HE HAVE TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF MICRONESIA, AT THE SAME TIME HE IS OBLIGATED TO ALSO SERVE THE INTERESTS OF THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY."

BASILIUS SAID CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE HICOM IS "...A NON-MICRONESIAN AND IS ATTEMPTING TO SERVE TWO INTERESTS AT THE SAME TIME." JOHNSTON DESERVES COMMENDATION BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN "PERHAPS THE BEST, MOST INTERESTED, MOST ACCESSIBLE HIGH COMMISSIONER SINCE THE TRUSTEESHIP WAS INSTITUTED."

(EQUAL PAY)

SAIPAN, MARCH 3 (MNS)---IN HIS FIRST OFFICIAL ACTION AS A SPECIAL CONSULTANT TO THE JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL MATTERS, SENATOR JOHN MANGEFEL (YAP) HAS COME UP WITH A UNIQUE PLAN FOR ACHIEVING THE LONG SOUGHT GOAL OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK: OR AT LEAST A PLAN WHICH WOULD ACHIEVE THE FIRST HALF OF THAT SLOGAN--EQUAL PAY.

THE SENATOR, WHOSE APPOINTMENT WAS PARTIALLY AUTHORIZED LAST

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WEEK WHEN THE SENATE ADOPTED A JOINT RESOLUTION NAMING HIM TO THE SPECIAL CONSULTANT POSITION (SJR 111), SAID IN A LETTER TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, SENATOR ANDON AMARAICH (TRUK), THAT ALTHOUGH THE HOUSE HAS NOT YET ADOPTED THE RESOLUTION HE HAS COMPLETED A STUDY OF THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PAY PLAN AND HAS COME UP WITH A RECOMMENDATION.

"YOUR SPECIAL CONSULTANT FEELS THAT THE RECOMMENDATION HAS MERIT AND IF FOLLOWED WOULD ELIMINATE MANY IF NOT ALL OF THE INEQUITIES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM," SENATOR MANGEFEL SAID WITH A GRIN AS HE HANDED A COPY OF HIS REPORT TO SENATOR AMARAICH.

ENTITLED "A PLAN FOR ALL SEASONS AND REASONS", THE REPORT TRACES THE LONG AND CONFUSING HISTORY OF THE EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK CONCEPT, CONCLUDING WITH THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATION:

"...THAT THE PAY OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, MICRONESIAN AND NON-MICRONESIAN ALIKE, SHALL BE ARRIVED AT THUSLY:

"THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE ANNUAL GRANT FUND APPROPRIATIONS RELEGATED TO THE PAYMENT OF SALARIES OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SHALL BE DIVIDED BY THE TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE DIVIDEND THEREUPON DERIVED SHALL CONSTITUTE THE ANNUAL SALARY OF ALL EMPLOYEES TO BE PAID IN 26 BIMONTHLY INSTALLMENTS."

SENATOR MANGEFEL, COMMENTING ON HIS PROPOSAL, SAID: "AS YOU WILL RECALL, MANY TIMES IN THE PAST I HAVE MADE WHAT I CONSIDER SOME VERY GOOD SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT THIS CONGRESS COULD DO TO SOLVE MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS IN MICRONESIA. UNFORTUNATELY, USUALLY MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUES DO NOT TAKE ME SERIOUSLY. YOU WILL RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SOME TIME AGO I INTRODUCED A BILL WHICH WOULD HAVE REPLACED ALL OF OUR COMPLICATED AND CONFUSING LAWS WITH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, BUT THE CONGRESS REFUSED TO ENACT THIS LEGISLATION."

NOW, HE SAID, HE HAS COME UP WITH A PAY PLAN WHICH "...WILL GIVE EQUAL PAY FOR EIGHT EQUAL HOURS OF WORK PER DAY, 40 HOURS PER WEEK, 52 WEEKS A YEAR.

"IF ANYONE CAN COME UP WITH A MORE SIMPLE SOLUTION THAN THAT, LET HIM SPEAD NOW OR FOREVER HOLD HIS PEACE," SAID THE INDEFATIGABLE SENATOR FROM YAP.