

COM Ends In Marathon Session

SAIPAN (MNS) Ending with the usual marathon meeting, the Fifth Congress of Micronesia concluded its second regular session on Saipan early yesterday 50 days and a few hours after it began.

Once again it was necessary to "stop the clock" as the 33 lawmakers worked beyond midnight, when the session was to end. Despite some early indications the session might wind up near the proper times, members of the house and senate found themselves involved in conference committees and debates that pushed the final time of adjournment into the wee hours of the morning.

The senate finally concluded its business shortly after 5 a.m., while the house of representatives adjourned "sine die" just before 6 a.m.

Trust Territory High Commissioner Edward E.

Johnston was on hand to witness the final hours and to receive the delegations from the house and senate that ceremonially informed him the Congress had concluded its business and was ready to adjourn.

Invited to deliver brief remarks in the house, the HiCom called attention to two major accomplishments of the session, establishment of a constitutional convention for Micronesia and creation of the seventh administrative district of Kusaie.

These two bills were passed and sent to the High Commissioner on the final day. There were 25 bills passed Monday, more than the total approved during the first 49 days of the session.

Some 45 bills passed during the session, according to an unofficial tabulation.

Major appropriations included

\$659,000 for scholarships, \$1,722,243 for operating and contingent expenses of the Congress of Micronesia for the year beginning April 1, the largest Congressional budget ever, and \$300,000 to fund a government Coconut Processing Authority.

Most of the bills to fund various projects in the six districts were not dealt with, since the leadership decided to delay these to a special session they hope will be called this summer. This accounts in part for the relatively low total of bills passed during the session, it was noted.

One major bill which failed to win approval in the closing hours was a measure to facilitate the return of public lands to the districts.

Passed by the senate, the measure came to the house in the closing days of the session, when it was passed on first reading. Each time the measure came up for second reading,

however, it generated debate and amendments until finally, in one of their last official acts before adjournment, house members voted to defer action on the return of public lands until the expected special session this summer.

Resolutions also formed a substantial part of the last-minute work of the congress.

Lawmakers adopted a measure "demanding" that the United States terminate the moratorium on homesteading on Tinian and one urging that the U.S. grant a greater degree of "political autonomy" to the TT.

They also adopted a resolution urging the U.S. to sponsor Micronesian membership in the Asian Development Bank, a companion measure to another bill passed on the final day to establish a Micronesian Development Bank.

Resolutions asking that

deputies be appointed to the District Administrator of Ponape and to the Director of the Department of Finance were adopted. The lawmakers also took action to approve the nominations of two individuals by approving joint resolutions consenting to the naming of Eusebio Rechucher as director of Resources and Development and of Joseph W. Beadles Jr. as director of Transportation and Communications.

Unless a special session is called, the next regular session of the Congress of Micronesia will be the first of the Sixth Congress, convening in January 1975 after the 1974 general election. A special session this summer is likely, however, observers say.

It will be up to the congress leadership to request such a session and designate its choice for a location and agenda to the High Commissioner, who must issue the official "call" for any special session.