

An Elected HiCom?

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SAIPAN - Popular election of the high commissioner and deputy high commissioner of the Trust Territory is one of six rights asked by the Congress of Micronesia to further Micronesians' political autonomy.

Both are now presidential appointees.

In a resolution adopted this week requesting the United States to grant greater administrative control to Micronesians, the Congress also asked the U.S. to allow:

- The Congress of Micronesia to approve justices named to the Trust Territory High Court.
- The TT government alone to make sea and air transportation contracts affecting Micronesia.
- The Congress of Micronesia to override vetoes of legislation by the high commissioner when it affects internal TT matters.
- The TT government to allocate federal grant funds among its departments and programs.
- The elimination of the ceiling on annual federal appropriations for the TT.

As long as Micronesians are denied these rights, said a senate committee in recommending approval of the resolution, "any talk of self-government is a sham and a ruse."

The committee called on the United States "to make good" a promise of Interior Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton, who stated Jan. 23 that the Government of the United States must and will do everything possible to provide you with the tools and skills to help you in assuming these responsibilities (of self-government) and in chartering a new course of a self-governing people."

Added the committee:

"For nearly 30 years, Micronesia has been governed by the United States. For almost 27 of those years, the United States has been obligated by the terms of the trusteeship agreement between the United States and the United Nations to 'promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory toward self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances

of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.

"Ten other trusteeships have come and gone in that period," said the committee, "only Micronesia remains.

"The reason, plainly and simply, is that the United States, despite its words, has not lived up to its obligations in this respect.

"What strides have been made toward self-government in Micronesia in past years have been made by the Congress of Micronesia, often in spite of the United States rather than with its aid and encouragement."

The resolution notes that the U.N. Trusteeship Council and members of the U.S. Congress "have in the past urged that the administering authority grant increasing authority to the people of Micronesia to hasten the process of self-determination and self-government."