

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Prepared by Micronesian News Service

Saipan, Mariana Islands

April 1-5, 1974

DATE SET FOR MARIANAS STATUS TALKS

A date has been set for the resumption of the negotiations between the United States and the Mariana Islands on the future political status of that district. Senator Edward Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, announced last week that following a meeting involving him and his co-chairman, Vicente Santos, with Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, in Honolulu, the date of May 15 has been selected for the start of the fourth round in the negotiations. The site is tentatively to be Honolulu, depending on the availability of funds, but Saipan is the second choice.

The meeting in Hawaii was one of two being held in quick succession by Ambassador Williams to lay the groundwork for resumption of formal status talks. Also last week, he and other American officials were to meet in San Francisco with Senator Lazarus Salii and Representative Ekpap Silk, Chairman and co-chairman, respectively, of the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Future Status, to discuss plans for the next round in the larger status talks. No results from that meeting were available at week's end.

ACTION TAKEN ON SEVERAL BILLS

Final action was taken on a number of bills passed during the recent Second Regular Session of the Fifth Congress of Micronesia by Deputy High Commissioner Peter T. Coleman last week. Six bills were signed into law, while two were disapproved.

The new public laws include an appropriation of just over 1.7 million dollars to fund the Congress of Micronesia for the next fiscal year, and smaller appropriations to fund the operations of the Social Security Office, the TT Revenue Division, and the TT Personnel Board.

Among the non-appropriation bills signed into law last week were measures designated to safeguard the rights of minors involved in cases before the land commissions, and to broaden the definition of dangerous device within the Weapons Control Law to include possession of such things as switchblade knives, blackjacks, daggers, and metal, wooden or shark's tooth knuckles.

The two bills vetoed included the controversial Admiralty and Maritime Act, now disapproved twice by the Administration. That bill is being sent to Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton, who has the final say on it. And a bill that would have required the approval of district planning commissions for the use of any public land by a non-citizen. The latter bill was disapproved because the planning commissions are advisory bodies, and the Administration could not go along with putting them in the position of making policy. It was also felt that the provisions of the bill were not consistent

with the stated policy of returning public lands to the control of the districts.

A number of other bills were officially transmitted to the High Commissioner's Office during the week. 46 were passed during the session. So far, ten have been signed, and three disapproved.

AIRLINE HEARING COMPLETES ONE FULL MONTH

The long, complicated hearing into the Saipan/Japan airline route case completed one full month in session on Saipan on Friday of last week, with testimony continuing to be heard in Phase One of the case, which is an investigation of whether any of the airlines applying for the route did anything to violate the rules of procedures of the U.S. Civil Aeronautics Board as they lobbied for local support in Micronesia. Phase two, when it begins, will be an attempt by CAB Administrative Law Judge Greer Murphy to determine exactly where the various Micronesian parties actually stand on the award. Observers now estimate that the hearing will last through most of April. It began March 11, and is taking place in the Trust Territory High Court chambers in Susupe, Saipan.

BUDGET HEARINGS HELD IN WASHINGTON

Trust Territory High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston and Congressman Raymond Setik of Truk, Chairman of the Congress of Micronesia Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning, led a high-level delegation from the Trust Territory to Washington for hearings into the Fiscal Year 1975 Trust Territory budget request last week. Hearings were also held late last month on a second supplemental request for the FY 1974 TT budget. The Trust Territory is seeking an increase in the ceiling presently authorized on annual grant funds from the U.S. from its present 61 million dollars to 85 million over the next three years. The hearings were held before the House and Senate subcommittees on Interior and related agencies of the committees on appropriations, chaired by Representative Julia Butler Hansen and Senator Alan Bible.

ENIWETOK SURVEY COMPLETED

Two officials of the United States Atomic Energy Commission are to be in the Trust Territory this month to deliver copies of the final report on the radiological survey of Eniwetok Atoll, in the Marshalls. They will call at Saipan first, to present a copy of the report to Deputy High Commissioner Peter T. Coleman and another to Ted Mitchell, Director of the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation, and then they will fly to Majuro to present the report to officials there and answer any questions which may come up concerning it. Making the trip will be Roger Ray, Assistant Manager of Operations of the AEC in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Dr. Walter Nervik, who was technical director of the survey. Accompanying them will be Harry U. Brown from the Office of Territorial Affairs in the Interior Department.

BABELTHUAP PLAN COMPLETED

A master plan for the island of Babelthuap in Palau District, the Trust Territory's largest island, was completed and presented last week on Saipan by Philip Chamberlain, Chief of the Planning Division. The plan, done by

Hawaii Architects and Engineers, is the last master plan to be done in the Trust Territory by outside consultants. Future master plans will be prepared by the Planning Division's own staff, Chamberlain said. The Babelthuap plan was drawn up taking into consideration the stated wishes of the people of the island for development, and emphasizes agriculture, conservation, and a harmonious co-existence between man and the environment on the island. What little industrial development is planned is limited to the municipality of Airai, in the area around the present airfield. Tourism development should be limited, and kept in local hands, according to the plan's recommendations. The plan will serve as a basic reference and point of discussion for future development on Babelthuap, which is quite underpopulated in relation to what the island could support. The 1973 census put the population there at less than 4,000.

BRIEFLY, HERE ARE SOME OTHER ITEMS THAT MADE NEWS IN THE TRUST TERRITORY LAST WEEK:

Winners were announced in the Congress of Micronesia Dress Contest, to select a formal attire for members of the Congress to wear at all formal occasions. The winners, each of whom will receive \$250, are Ophin Reselap of Truk and Belhaim Sakuma of Palau.

Ninety-five students received their diplomas from Micronesian Occupational Center in Koror, in winter graduation ceremonies held late in March. It is the largest graduating class ever for the vocational institution.

More than \$500,000 in income tax refund checks was distributed last week to employees throughout the Trust Territory by the Revenue Division.

The search for eight persons, missing after a boat accident between Tinian and Saipan, was officially called off last week. None of the eight was ever found. A memorial to the missing has been erected on Tinian, where most of the lost boaters lived.

An agricultural course for vegetable farmers was held last week on Saipan, with more than 30 farmers taking part.

Legislative sessions are under way in Palau and Ponape. Both Speaker Itebang Luiu of the Palau District Legislature and Speaker Itor Harris of the Ponape District Legislature were re-elected to their positions for another term. The session of the Marshall Islands Nitijela is also nearing its conclusion in Majuro.

A business permit to a company that hopes to provide cable television to the Marshall Islands was approved by the Deputy High Commissioner last week.

A boat missing in Yap District with two men aboard was located by a search plane last week after six days of drifting, and towed to Palau by a rescue boat. The two men aboard were reported to be in good condition.

And finally, members of the Education for Self Government Task force travelled to the Eastern Districts last week to begin explaining the program for ESG leading up to the Constitutional Convention election to the people. That election is scheduled for June 4, with 42 delegates to be selected.