

Congress of Micronesia - February 10, 1975

Speaker Edwin: Mr. President and fellow Senators:

As I look back over the past years in the Senate, I have the sense of gratitude for not only the rewarding experiences in the legislative work, but also of the pleasant fellowship which has broadened and enlightened my views on important aspects of life.

We have been working at this job for nearly ten years, and I believe we have accomplished a great deal in terms of legislative undertaking for the betterment and advancement of Micronesia and its people. We can be proud of some of our accomplishments in the past which, to me, are unquestionably worthy of the trust and honor bestowed upon us by our constituents.

Generally speaking, we know what we want for our people. We know what the problems are. And yet, it seems that we have not been able to come to grips with definitive and effective resolutions in the attack on and the removal of the very causes of these important problems in Micronesia. Such a condition may probably be attributed simply to our financial inadequacies as evident in our Congress' perennial financial tribulation. It may be attributed to our political uncertainties as evident in the variance and discordance shown by the barometer of our national unity. But it appears more so that the reason could be that we have not fully agreed together with our people on what should be our objectives, priorities and the methods by which they should be reached and accomplished. The need for a Micronesian united front is increasingly apparent and should be foremost in importance and consideration.

Mr. President, today we are not too sure that we can honestly say we are satisfied with our progress as yet. We are not too sure that many of our constituents can confidently say that they have been and still are with us all along, fully endorsing the path we have chosen to resolve the major of critical importance to them today and in the future.

These are most trying days for us as we face these complex and intricate problems which compulsively demand careful and tactful handling. They are delicate problems and should find their solutions from not only the soil of our minds but also from the warmth of our hearts. We are on the threshold of political maturity, and our success in coping with the problems of Micronesian unity and of our relationship with the administering authority can only be reasonable for the beginning of our move toward attainment of that Micronesian aspiration to achieve.

We may have failed, in one sense, that we did not in several instances appreciate and respect the unique desires and needs of the individual districts in Micronesia; and that, to a greater extent, our efforts have been directed to political matters which have outweighed and greatly overshadowed the importance of our economic development problems, which are so closely related and vitally essential in the overall development of our people. What is more vitalizing and fortifying for Micronesia in meeting its external challenges than its becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant?

Mr. President, we have tried our best; and we know that has not been the end; we shall make our best better.

The fact remains that many of us have carried a heavy burden of responsibility in the past, and still carry it today, as a result of these perplexing problems which have been thrust upon us, and which we have encountered in trying to make life better for our people. There has been countless endless struggle on our part in our search for this quest. But we have overcome many of the obstacles on our way, and we shall continue to move forward. We have come a long, long way.



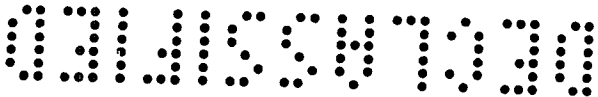
Perhaps, after a span of ten years in this job, a reappraisal of our aspirations, goals and the methods we have employed for their pursuit is in order. Conceivably, we must search our souls and conscience to know seriously what our real wishes and desires are, what problems will be encountered in their pursuit, and, more importantly, whether the people whom we represent are clearly with us and sharing the same sentiments. In so doing, we will have taken the right and fundamental approach to resolving our currently pressing problems. We will be better informed, better equipped and highly confident to take stock to chart a course for Micronesia and to pursue that course decisively and firmly together, apologizing to no man or nation.

Specifically speaking, these problems of our future political status, our relations with the United States with respect to our overall political development and the relations among our districts are difficult, but, perhaps, not insuperable. It seems that each one of them leads us back to the central issues before this Congress: the issue of our economic dependence. It is very easy to indulge ourselves in complex theoretical discourse of future political status. However, in doing so, we may not be totally realistic at this time since many of us feel that political status in the final analysis will be essentially dictated by economic realities. We have spent an enormous amount of money which, in light of our other needs, we could not afford; however, we take consolation in that the action we have taken was not in vain; in return we have gained invaluable knowledge in dealing with our mother country. At least, we have discovered some of the truths, painful truths, that should make us rethink our future position. But the fact remains that there can never be any realistic and satisfactory answer to the political question we face until there is a realistic and satisfactory answer to the economic one. In essence, our political aspirations cannot come to fruition and become realities without some kind of economic base to support them, and to strengthen our position as we pursue them.

After thirty years of United States tutelage over Micronesia under the United Nations trusteeship system, with the administering authority agreed to being responsible to promote and advance our economy, the principal economic base of Micronesia today remains the United States Treasury. This is a cold fact, a very unpleasant fact, that is very much indicative of the United States having been somewhat reluctant to diligently carry out its promise to assist Micronesia to become self-sufficient. There seems to have been too many can't's and don't's that set the red tape machine in motion to mastermind not our economic development, but our economic dependence. It is hard to believe that such an inert economic situation in Micronesia has been intended; it may just be serious oversight on the part of the Administration. The situation grows clearer and sadder each day to us, and we dare say we don't like it. As John Steinbeck wrote of charity in The Grapes of Wrath, it "makes a burn that don't come out."

Mr. President, I do not know if Micronesians can ever be a prosperous people. I gather that our success in attaining such a virtuous economic status will largely depend on what we Micronesians can do for ourselves and perhaps, to a great extent, on the good intention and proper attitude of the administering authority to live up to its pledged responsibilities. But I know that we can be strongly developed enough to know and speak our own minds, and this Congress and the District legislatures must take bold strides toward the goal of self-sufficiency through economic development which we ourselves plan and control, particularly in the full and proper cultivation and harvesting of our soil and marine resources.

We must take these steps now while we are yet able to break free of dependency. We must now concert and direct our minds and efforts to actual production of what we have -- what we can and should have -- and not to further studies of what we already know, not to piecemeal appropriations by the Congress that have no significant impact on our total national economy. Micronesia must feed itself.



A-3 from Saipan

It is necessary to a man's self-respect and well-being that he is free from his basic economic wants, that he is able to stand on his own feet to feed himself through his own labor, to build his roof with his own hands. Only then will he be free to think with his own mind. Wouldn't it have been the noblest and fairest thing this Congress could have done to set our people free from their basic economic wants and worries before putting the most important question to them as to what kind of a political status, or what kind of a government they want?

The thought of economic freedom for the Micronesian people is, indeed, noble, but it should not cast any false notion that such a freedom could be easily had. Contrary to what many of us may have wished, under the present circumstances of a noncollective government which is not too sensitive and responsive, it would not be surprising that the road to achieving it may be even steeper and harder than the one we have just trod in search of a suitable political status for the Micronesian people. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that our people must have this freedom and we shall try to secure it for them at any cost. We hope and pray that the United States Administration will review its attitude and become more sincere and sympathetic toward helping us in this direction; we hope and pray that our people will be together with us, ready to work hard and assist in bringing about a more favorable trade balance in the national economy by the increase of self-dependence, and ready to sacrifice some of their personal comforts if and when necessary. We hope and pray that this Congress will also be more prudent and sensitive in the allocation of its funds in the direction which will generate a desired greater impact on our national economy.

Mr. President, I am a father of a few children. From real experience, I know well that there comes a time when a father must say to his son or daughter, "You are a grown person. You can and must make your own decisions now. I will help you if you ask for help, but it is you who must take charge and make a go of your life." This was not easy for me as a father to say, but it was necessary, and I could not hide the pride my wife and I felt in two of our children as they grew up and became capable of assuming the responsibility for their own lives. They may burn their fingers occasionally, but they learn pretty fast that way how they want things.

Today Micronesia has grown up to be about thirty years under the tutelage administration of the United States, and perhaps, at this time, we can rightly feel that the time has come for America to give Micronesians that same kind of recognition and responsibility for their own lives. I believe that we will not disappoint America. I believe Micronesians will give America a personal pride in his offspring if Micronesians are given the chance to do so. We may burn our fingers from time to time; that's a necessary part of the process. But if we are to learn from our mistakes to become a viable people whom America can be proud of, the time to do so is now while an American administration is here to give advice and assistance. I do not imply here that the Trust Territory Government should continue to interfere with our Constitutional Convention legislation which we consider to be purely Micronesian affairs in the sense that Micronesians must be given a fair chance to exercise their right of self-determination.

Right now money comes from the United States often entailed and hedged about with restrictions arising out of programs designed for Detroit and Watts, not for Saipan and Ujae and Shawa. Let's be thankful for the good uses to which that money has been put in these islands in spite of these restrictions.

But I would recommend to the United States the example of the Trust Territory of Papua and New Guinea. For a number of years Australian support for that territory has been in the form of money made available for direct appropriation by the territorial parliament for the programs it considers necessary and wise. This is an example to follow if we are to develop a meaningful and lasting relationship with the United States. It is the example of a father who understands that his son has come of age. It is a sign of trust, and many Micronesians are today looking for such a sign. To trust us is the only way to develop our trust.



Page 4 of 5  
Encl. No. 4  
A-3 from Seipan

Of course, the United States has important security interests in Micronesia, but this should not be its excuse to hold the reins tight in other areas. Likewise, the United States must be willing to give its children their chance. No one mistakes the importance of security and defense. We Micronesians fully understand that we cannot on any account expose the United States to danger. But the United States has security interests elsewhere in the world, important strategic interests, for example, in Greece. It protects those interests through diplomacy, as it should. These interests are not an excuse for the United States to vote acts of the Greek legislature or to take lead from the Greeks for its security purposes without any or fair compensation. To do so here keeps us children. Strategic interests are not an excuse for the United States to insist on any particular terms by which the Greek people must govern themselves. To do so here keeps us children.

We Micronesians must rethink not only our relationship with the United States and with the rest of the world, but also our relationship with each other. The several districts of the Trust Territory have been yoked together by the violence of the world wars for the administrative conveniences of successive foreign powers. This union has had its strains and pressures, but on the whole it has been instructive and beneficial for Micronesians, and it has held up so far, and time alone can tell of its fate. I believe that the union can have a future, and I am ready to help cooperate in bringing this about. But not on the basis of a forced marriage held together by foreign control, not on the basis of a forced marriage under any conditions decided by this Congress and anyone without the consent and approval of the people of each district. Real unity of our several districts will come only from the people themselves, their habit of positive, meaningful, and fair association with one another, a habit of trust which may develop when each district has seen that it has nothing to fear, that its particular interest will not, in a future of free association, be ignored by its sister districts.

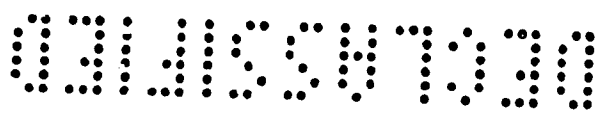
As of today, the problem presented by the majority of the people of the Marshall Islands District with respect to a revenue sharing principle and disparity still lingers and hounds our unity. The constant demands and pressures upon the delegation of the Marshalls by the adamant position of the people regarding their fairer share in the national fiscal responsibility have become almost unbearable.

I sincerely urge the Congress to settle this matter to save our unity in Micronesia.

One other issue, so crucial to the Marshall Islands District, is the Constitutional Convention election law, which is erroneous, improper and embarrassing to the Marshallese people. The election held under this law in the Marshalls had some effects which prompted the Senate in the last Congress Session to pass corrective measures to rectify the critical situation. I again urge the Senate to take every possible action to clear this matter, as I strongly believe that on such basic organic questions as the form of our future Constitution, districts must be reasonably satisfied with every step before we proceed. We cannot afford to build a government based on a deficient mandate of the people, and may I urgently remind you that there is as yet no real mandate at all from the Marshallese people.

Mr. President, we in this Congress must lead, but we cannot push our people. Effective leadership in this day and age is persuasive, not coercive. Our Congress should be the melting pot in which our differences coalesce. It should have been the forum whereby unity of Micronesians is shaped, secured and nurtured by mutual respect and understanding, not a forum for Machiavellian diplomacy, or some open power struggles. We in the Congress must take a look at ourselves and our attitudes, before pointing our accusing fingers at some of our districts trying to free themselves from the fear and wrath of dominance. Are we not responsible in some way for their bounding fearful and discontent? Mature realistic decisions will come, but they will come only when our people are economically as self-sufficient as possible, and when they develop through association as equals a sense of trust in the United States as a nation they may one day wish to share their future with and that sense of trust in each other. Let's give our Micronesians wity a chance.

D-427888



24

Page 5 of 5  
Encl. No. 4  
A-3 from Saipan

The goals of this Congress should be to provide for the basic, self-sufficient needs of Micronesians, and at the same time respect and accommodate their internal political needs. Accordingly, we can then act together to finally accept harmoniously the responsibilities and authority of self-government in which the will of the people -- all of the people -- will be supreme.

Thank you, Mr. President.

12-427889