

Week in Review

SUMMARY OF NEWS OF THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Prepared by Micronesian News Service

Saipan, Mariana Islands

April 8-12

ACTION TAKEN ON SEVERAL BILLS

This was a major week for action on bills passed during the 1974 session of the Congress of Micronesia. Deputy High Commissioner Peter T. Coleman, acting in the absence of High Commissioner Edward E. Johnston, signed a total 22 bills into law, and disapproved of an additional two. Thus at the end of the week 36 of the 46 bills passed by the Congress during its 1974 regular session on Saipan had been acted upon, with 31 becoming new laws, and 5 being vetoed.

In a special ceremony in his office, the Deputy HiCom put his signature to the measure which will make the island of Kusaie, in Ponape District, a separate administrative district by January, 1977. The bill is now Public Law 5-77, and marks the completion of a long struggle by the leaders of Kusaie to bring to the attention of the Congress of Micronesia and the administration their special needs and desire to become a separate district.

Another significant bill signed during the week was the measure which establishes a government authority to engage in the manufacture and processing of products derived from coconut trees. This bill, which is now Public Law 5-72, appropriates \$300,000 from the General Fund of the Congress of Micronesia to be put to work in developing ways to utilize Micronesia's most abundant agricultural resource.

In order of their numbers, here are the other new public laws which were created by actions taken last week: Public Law 5-63, a law providing that all voting members of district economic development boards must be citizens of the Trust Territory; Public Law 5-64, which corrects an error in the TT Code that placed a portion of Mili Atoll, in the Marshalls, outside the boundaries of the Trust Territory; Public Law 5-65, which restricts the harvesting of trochus in the TT to citizens of the territory; Public Law 5-66, appropriating \$22,000 as a supplemental appropriation for the Revenue Division for Fiscal Year 1974; Public Law 5-67, extending provisions of the TT Merit System Act to certain additional classifications of employees, and clarifying provisions of the law relating to overtime compensation and holiday pay for government workers; Public Law 5-68, appropriating \$50,000 to cover expenses of conducting the general election this fall; Public Law 5-69, a \$150,000 appropriation to establish a capital loan fund for animal and plant agriculture development on a commercial basis; Public Law 5-70, to provide for the establishment and operation of duty-free stores in official ports of entry in the TT; Public Law 5-71, a bill to create property rights in the holders of homestead certificates of compliance; Public Law 5-72, the coconut processing law; Public Law 5-73, an appropriation of \$80,000 to fund the district fishing authorities; Public Law 5-74, relating to

the Marshall Islands and eliminating the requirement that the Nitijela provide matching funds for money appropriated earlier by the Congress for special projects; Public Law 5-75, permitting the Trust Territory Government to grant the use of public land on Pagan Island and in the Kagman and Marpi areas of Saipan for such public purposes as the erection of schools, stores, churches and hotels; Public Law 5-76, providing for the expiration of nonresident worker's hiring permits when no such worker has been hired and is present in the TT within sixty days from the date of the agreement; Public Law 5-77, the Kusaie District Law; Public Law 5-78, establishing the Office of Territorial Planner within the Office of the High Commissioner; Public Law 5-79, eliminating the present Micronesian income tax deduction for anyone earning five thousand dollars or more a year; Public Law 5-80, making certain amendments to the Rongelap-Utirik fallout victims benefit law; Public Law 5-81, providing for establishment of a foreign service premium for Micronesian Government employees whose work requires them to live outside the Trust Territory; Public Law 5-82, a bill to establish a Micronesian Sports Council and appropriating \$80,000 to fund it; and finally, the only private law to come out of the Congress this year, Private Law 5-1, making Estafania Rios Arce of Saipan eligible for naturalization as a citizen of the Trust Territory.

Vetoed by the Deputy HiCom and returned to the Congress were the following bills: A measure that would have exempted private schools from payment of gasoline and diesel fuel excise taxes, disapproved because it was "too broad" and would be difficult to enforce; and a bill to provide for the appointment of a special prosecutor in certain cases involving contempt of Congress, disapproved because a case now pending before the Trust Territory High Court involves important issues related to contempt of Congress and should be resolved before any legislation in the area is enacted.

CONFERENCE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS UNDERWAY

Turning to other news from last week, a conference of traditional Micronesian leaders got underway in Ponape District, with a disappointingly small turnout of leaders from the other districts. Sponsors of the conference, the traditional leaders of Ponape, had hoped to convene a major meeting involving all of Micronesia's highest chiefs and other ranking traditional leaders. Instead, when the conference opened last week, only leaders from Ponape and Truk Districts were there. Nevertheless, the conference went ahead as scheduled, and toward the end of the week there were indications that traditional leaders from Yap, and possibly from Palau, were on their way to Ponape to join in the meeting. It seemed unlikely, however, that any of the Marshallese traditional leaders would take part, although reasons for this were not entirely clear. The Marianas District has no traditional leadership, and thus had not been expected to take part in any case.

Topics such as Micronesian unity, future political status, and education in Micronesia were to occupy the traditional leaders during the two week conference, at the end of which they are expected to issue some statement of their conclusions and recommendations.

ENIWETOK REPORT DISTRIBUTED

Two officials who were involved in the radiological survey of Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands were in the Trust Territory last week to distribute the report of the survey, an imposing, three-volume study that details present radioactive levels for all parts of the Eniwetok environment on all islands. Roger Ray of the Atomic Energy Commission and Dr. Walter Nervik of the AEC's Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California met with Deputy High Commissioner Coleman and other TT staff members to explain the report, as well as with representatives of the Eniwetok people on both Saipan and in Majuro. The report contains no recommendations of radiological cleanup levels or criteria for cleanup, but such recommendations are being prepared, using the study as their basis. These recommendations, when completed, along with engineer survey reports and master plans for resettlement of Eniwetok Atoll, will determine U.S. Government actions necessary to ready the atoll for return of the Eniwetok people, an Atomic Energy Commission press release said.

BARGE SINKS ON WAY TO PONAPE

The residents of Ponape awoke one morning early last week to the unhappy news that a barge, loaded with containers of food and other supplies and U.S. mail, had gone to the bottom of the ocean near Truk. The barge, which had been chartered by TransPacific Lines, Inc., from the Luzon Stevedoring Company of the Philippines to help in moving stalled cargo from Guam to the districts, was being towed to Ponape by the tugboat "Challenger" when she broke up and sank in heavy seas. On board the barge were 76 containers, including 34 full of "mixed cargo" of food and general items, 13 full of beverages and liquor, one of poisons, 14 full of rice, another loaded with flour, a container of soap, and nine containers full of chicken feed, which is in short supply in Ponape. The barge also contained one, 20-foot container full of U.S. Mail, destined for Ponape.

The TransPac receiver, John Meadows, has filed suit against Luzon Stevedoring Company, charging negligence, in an attempt to recover the 2.5 to 3 million dollar loss.

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

Four fishermen from Ponape, missing since March 16, were picked up by a Danish Freighter last week more than 900 miles from where they were last seen. The ship brought the four, all in good condition despite nearly a month drifting at sea, to Guam where they were transferred to a plane and flown home to their anxiously awaiting families.

A book, published in Hawaii, is thought to be the first book ever written by a Micronesian of the Trust Territory and published by a professional publishing house. The book is "Micronesia at the Crossroads: a Reappraisal of the Micronesian Political Dilemma," and its author is Carl Heine of the Marshall Islands, who is presently studying for a graduate degree in Hawaii.

Congress of Micronesia hearings into the business operations of the United Micronesia Development Corporation (UMDA) began last week on Saipan, before a committee chaired by Representative Sasao Haruo of Truk.

The Civil Aeronautics Board hearings into the Saipan/Japan route case continued last week on Saipan, with Phase Two, an examination of where the people of Micronesia stand on the route, beginning. Phase One, an investigation of the conduct of the airlines in seeking Micronesian support for their applications, finally ended after four weeks of testimony.

Two U.S. Navy gunboats took into custody a 70-foot Taiwan fishing vessel at unpopulated Helen Reef, in Palau District. Navy crewmen observed two small boats from the larger ship on the reef, taking turtles and shell-fish, which is illegal. The gunboats escorted the fishing boat to Koror, where a trial will be held.

The Deputy District Administrator of Palau, Haruo Remeliik, and the Speaker of the District Legislature, Itebang Luii, both addressed the legislature last week, with Remeliik delivering the State of the District message in the absence of DistAd Thomas Remengesau, who is in Washington, D.C.

The Chief of the Trust Territory Transportation Division, Wayne Thiessen, entered pleas of not guilty last week in Marianas District Court to two counts of obstructing justice and interfering with the service of an arrest warrant, charges that grew out of the arrest of the TransPac ship M/V Lotte Reith on Saipan last month. Trial was set for May 1.

The Speaker of the Marianas District Legislature, Vicente Santos, was charged in a civil action last week with misappropriating for his own use more than \$35,000 in district legislature funds. The Trust Territory Government brought the action in an attempt to recover the money.

And finally, Senator Lazarus Salii, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, met earlier this month in Carmel, California with Ambassador F. Haydn Williams concerning future negotiating sessions between the U.S. and Micronesia. Senator Salii will make a report to the full committee on the meeting later in April.