

the world

Northern Marianas vote to join U.S. as commonwealth

SAIPAN (UPI) — The people of the northern Mariana Islands voted yesterday to accept commonwealth status with the United States. It is the first time in half a century that the United States has acquired new territory.

The counting of the votes in more than half of the 13 precincts showed that about 80 per cent of the population of about 16,000 voted to accept the commonwealth covenant signed in February by their political leaders and agents of the United States.

The covenant provided that at least 55 per cent must vote in favor or the covenant is void.

THE ISLANDERS have been asking for admittance to the American family for 20 years, but it was not until three years ago that the United States agreed to enter into negotiations separate from the other five districts of Micronesia.

The new commonwealth will be composed of all the Mariana islands north of the American island of Guam and will include such prominent names of World War II as Saipan and Tinian.

Representatives from the United Nations General Assembly have been in the northern Marianas for two weeks overseeing the campaigning.

First results were radioed from the sparsely populated islands of Alamagan, Agrihan and Pagan, about 250 miles north of Saipan. All of the 50 eligible voters in those three islands voted.

ROTA AND TINIAN, south of Saipan, also radioed their results, which continued the 80 per cent trend.

The United States will provide \$13.5 million a year to the northern Marianas for seven years and make a full range of Federal programs available.

The covenant will be sent to Congress with hopes that it will ratify the agreement by September.

Under the agreement, the Marianas will sell the United States land for military and other uses.