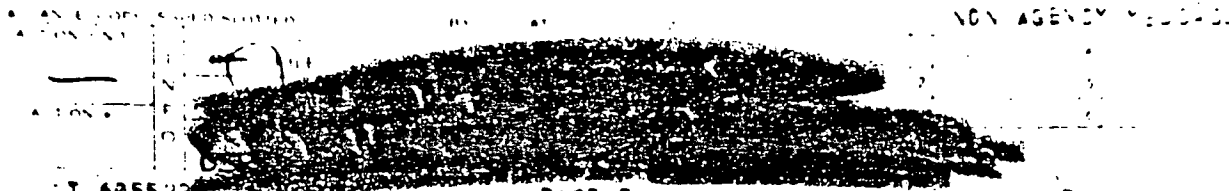


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AMBASSY CANBERRA FOR PAC. ISL. MONTHLY
(COM ENACTS LAW OF SEA LEGISLATION)

SAIPAN, FEB, 15 (COM) -- MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE
OF THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TODAY ENACTED A BILL WHICH WOULD
PROVIDE A 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE FOR MICRONESIAN WATERS.

SENATE BILL NO. 7-18, WAS PASSED ON SECOND READING IN THE
HOUSE AS HOUSE DRAFT ONE, AND TRANSMITTED TO THE SENATE WHICH
CONCURRED IN MINOR CHANGES BY THE HOUSE, INCLUDING A LAST-MINUTE
FLOOR AMENDMENT BY REP. KUNIHO NAKAMURA TO CHANGE THE
APPROPRIATION AMOUNT TO AN AUTHORIZATION FOR A LATER APPROPRIATION.

THE BILL FACES POSSIBLE VETO BECAUSE OF U.S. OBJECTIONS
TO CERTAIN OF ITS PROVISIONS.

DURING DISCUSSION OF THE BILL IN THE HOUSE, FLOOR LEADER
LUKE THAN READ FROM A PREPARED STATEMENT WHICH HE LATER INSERTED
INTO THE JOURNAL.

IN HIS REMARKS, HE QUOTED FROM THE STATEMENT OF THE BILL'S
PURPOSE.

"THE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE SEA OF MICRONESIA ARE A FINITE,
BUT RENEWABLE PART OF THE PHYSICAL HERITAGE OF THE PEOPLE OF
MICRONESIA. BEING NEARLY DEVOID OF LAND BASED RESOURCES, THE
SEA PROVIDES THE ONLY FEASIBLE MEANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC
VIABILITY NECESSARY TO PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR POLITICAL
STABILITY."

REP. THAN ALSO SAID THAT THE STATEMENT NOTES THAT RESOURCES
ARE NOW BEING EXPLOITED BY OTHERS "WITH NO BENEFITS TO US" AND
THAT THEREFORE:

"THE PURPOSE OF THE (BILL) IS TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND TO MANAGE AND CONSERVE MICRONESIA'S VITAL SEA
RESOURCES BY MEANS OF THE EXTENSION OF THE RESOURCES JURISDICTION
OF MICRONESIA OUT 200 MILES FROM ITS SHORES.

THAN SAID THAT THE MEASURE WAS A RESULT OF "INTENSIVE
STUDY BY THE CONGRESS, AND TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION PERTINENT
LAW OF THE SEA LEGISLATION BY THE UNITED STATES AND ALSO THE
REVISED SINGLE NEGOTIATING TEXT OF THE UNITED NATIONS LAW OF THE
SEA CONFERENCE."

THE YAP CONGRESSMAN, WHO IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE MICRONESIAN
DELEGATION TO THE LAW OF THE SEA, EXPLAINED IN HIS STATEMENT
THAT THE BILL ALSO HAD INPUT FROM THE TT ATTORNEY GENERAL'S

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OFFICE, THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER SOURCES.
 THE BILL HAS PROVISIONS WHICH APPLY TO HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES OF FISH SUCH AS TUNA, IN THE 200 MILE ZONE AND IT PROVIDES FOR A MICRONESIAN MARITIME AUTHORITY TO MANAGE THE AREA, INCLUDING NEGOTIATING WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS THROUGH APPROPRIATE CHANNELS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

DISTRICT AUTHORITIES ARE ALSO CREATED BY THE BILL, ACCORDING TO REP. TMAN "TO MANAGE AND REGULATE THE HARVESTING OF THEIR MARINE RESOURCES."

"FURTHERMORE, THE EFFECTIVE DATES OF DIFFERENT PROVISIONS OF THIS BILL ARE DESIGNED TO ALLOW THE MARITIME AUTHORITY TO BEGIN TO ORGANIZE UPON APPROVAL BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, AND THE ECONOMIC ZONE TO BECOME EFFECTIVE ON JULY 1, 1976. IN OTHER WORDS, THE BILL IS DESIGNED SO THAT THE MACHINERY NEEDED TO REGULATE OUR OCEAN RESOURCES CAN BE SET IN ORDER AND OPERATIVE BEFORE THE ZONE BECOMES LEGALLY EFFECTIVE," TMAN SAID.

HE ALSO RELATED THAT THE BILL WAS CONSISTENT WITH LAST ACTIONS OF THE COM LAW OF THE SEA COMMITTEE, AND THE CURRENT DELEGATION.

CONGRESSMAN TMAN ALSO NOTED COMMENTS BY THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT'S LIAISON OFFICER, IN A LETTER DATED FEBRUARY 14, 1977, WHICH SAID THAT WHILE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT VIEWS THE BILL AS A "CONSTRUCTIVE STEP" THAT IN ITS PRESENT FORM IT "CONTAINS CERTAIN PROVISIONS AND LANGUAGE WHICH THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UNABLE TO ACCEPT."

THE MAIN OBJECTIONS TO THE MEASURE WERE (1) THAT EVEN THOUGH THE BILL PROVIDES FOR THE MARITIME AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AS PROVIDED BY SECRETARIAL ORDER; "THE UNITED STATES CANNOT ACQUIESCE IN THE ASSUMPTION OF THIS RIGHT BY THE AUTHORITY OR THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA", AND (2) "CERTAIN PROVISIONS IN THE BILL CONTINUE TO ASSERT JURISDICTION OVER SUCH SPECIES AS TUNA".

THE U.S. POSITION ON HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH LIKE TUNA IS, ACCORDING TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE BILL "VERY MUCH ALONE IN THE WORLD OF NATIONS IN REFUSING TO RECOGNIZE ASSERTION OF JURISDICTION" OVER TUNA. THE BILL, IT POINTS OUT, IS HOWEVER, CONSISTENT WITH POSITION OF THE UN SPONSORED LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE.

THE REPORT ALSO CONCLUDES THAT "FOR THE PURPOSES OF APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF THIS BILL WHEN ENACTED . . . THE

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UNITED STATES WILL BE OBLIGATED AND DIRECTED BY THE TRUSTEESHIP AGREEMENT AND NOT THE (U.S.) FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1976."
(200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE BILL GENERATES DEBATE)
SAIPAN, FEBRUARY 15 (MNS) -- THE "MARINE SPACE JURISDICTION" BILL ESTABLISHING A 200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE THAT PASSED THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA TUESDAY (FEB. 15) GENERATED LIVELY

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DEBATE AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. THIS BILL IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PIECES OF LEGISLATION TO PASS THE CONGRESS TO DATE THIS SESSION.

TWO MEMBERS OF THE PALAU DELEGATION, REPS. KUNINGO NAKAMURA AND ISIDORO RUDIMCH SPOKE AGAINST PASSAGE OF THE BILL.

RUDIMCH SAID THE CONGRESS SHOULD ACCOMODATE THE U.S. POSITION ON THE BILL BECAUSE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS BEING ASKED TO ENFORCE THIS MEASURE ONCE IT BECOMES LAW. "AND WE CANNOT JUST BLINDLY, UNILATERALLY ENACT SOMETHING WITHOUT THE INPUT --- SOME WORKABLE ARRANGEMENT --- WITH THE OTHER PARTY," RUDIMCH SAID.

NAKAMURA SAID THE LAW OF THE SEA MATTER SHOULD BE POSTPONED UNTIL MICRONESIA'S POLITICAL STATUS IS RESOLVED. HE SAID THE LAW OF THE SEA ISSUE IS A VERY COMPLEX MATTER BECAUSE IT DEALS WITH INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS. "I FEEL THAT THIS CONGRESS OUGHT TO BE A LITTLE BIT MORE DIPLOMATIC AND TRY TO ACCOMODATE SOME OF THE CONCERNS OF THE UNITED STATES OVER THE MATTER AND THEN COME UP WITH EQUITABLE LEGISLATION WHICH MAY NOT ONLY PROTECT OUR INTEREST BUT AT THE SAME TIME PROTECT THE INTEREST OF SOME OF THE U.S. COMPANIES IN MICRONESIA...," NAKAMURA EMPHASIZED.

SPEAKING IN FAVOR OF THE BILL WERE REPS. LUKE TYAN, HANS WILJANDER, LAMBERT AAFIN AND EKPAP SILK.

TYAN SAID THE CONGRESS SHOULD APPROVE THE BILL DESPITE THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT'S OBJECTIONS. "...IF WE WERE TO ACCOMODATE THOSE OBJECTIONS AND INCORPORATE THEM IN THE BILL," TYAN DECLARED, "IT WOULD TOTALLY DILUTE AND DESTROY THE INTENT OF THE LEGISLATION AS TO RENDER IT TOTALLY MEANINGLESS. IT IS GOING TO BE ONLY A PIECE OF PAPER WITHOUT ANY (MICRONESIAN) JURISDICTION."

REP. WILJANDER INFORMED THE HOUSE THAT THE ONLY U.S. OBJECTION TO THE BILL WAS WITH REGARD TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES, WHICH IS TUNA, BECAUSE IT CONFLICTS WITH THE PRESENT U.S. FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1976 (U.S. PL 94-26). "IN (THIS) CASE," WILJANDER SAID, "THE UNITED STATES IS ALONE TODAY IN THAT AREA BECAUSE ALL THE COASTAL STATES WOULD LIKE TO GET JURISDICTION OR HAVE ENACTED THEIR OWN LAWS HAVING JURISDICTION OVER THE HIGHLY

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MIGRATORY FISH --- WHICH IS TUNA.

"IN SHORT," WILIANDER EXPLAINED, "WE ARE IN CONFORMITY WITH INTERNATIONAL MARITIME LAW AND (THE) INTERNATIONAL MARITIME MOOD, AND THE MOOD TODAY IS THAT ALL COASTAL STATES WOULD LIKE TO HAVE JURISDICTION OF 200-MILES AND WOULD LIKE TO HAVE JURISDICTION OVER THE HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES."

REP. EKPAP SILK SAID THAT THE LAW OF THE SEA MATTER IS ONE OF THE REMAINING UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN THE POLITICAL STATUS NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES "DOES NOT SEE FIT" TO SUPPORT THE MICRONESIAN POSITION ON MARINE RESOURCES WHICH ARE VITAL TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. "...UNLESS WE MAKE OUR WISHES KNOWN," HE WARNED, "WE WILL LOSE THE VALUABLE RESOURCES IN THE SEAS SURROUNDING US."

REP. LAMBERT AAFIN REMARKED THAT MICRONESIA'S MARINE RESOURCES ARE NEEDED FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MICRONESIA. "OUR LANDS DO NOT PROVIDE US WITH THE NATURAL RESOURCES THAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE. THE SEA IS THE ONLY ONE THAT WE SEE RIGHT NOW. UNLESS THE U.S. CAN GIVE US A BETTER WAY OF ACHIEVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT," AAFIN TOLD THE HOUSE, "THIS BILL MUST BE APPROVED" TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICRONESIA'S ECONOMY.

THE MEASURE PASSED BY A VOTE OF 19-2 IN THE HOUSE. NAKAMURA AND RUDIMCH VOTED AGAINST IT. THE SENATE SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED THE HOUSE AMENDMENTS WHICH WOULD DELETE THE \$120,000 AMOUNT REQUESTED IN THE BILL BUT WOULD AUTHORIZE SUCH APPROPRIATION AS MAY BE NECESSARY.

IN OTHER BUSINESS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES POSTPONED ACTION UNTIL NEXT YEAR ON A MEASURE WHICH WOULD PLACE A RESTRICTION ON ALL HIRING AND SALARY INCREASES EXCEPT WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES FOR ALL POSITIONS IN THE EXECUTIVE, (SB 7-77) AFTER MEETING CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION.

THE SENATE LAST WEEK PASSED THE BILL AND SENT IT TO THE HOUSE. THE HOUSE APPROVED IT ON FIRST READING AND IT WAS UP ON TUESDAY'S (FEB, 15) CALENDAR FOR SECOND AND FINAL READING. IT NEVER CLEARED THE HOUSE AS MEMBERS IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED THE BILL.

FIRST TO SPEAK WAS REP. RUBEN ZACHRAS OF THE MARSHALLS WHO ARGUED THAT THE CONGRESS HAS SPENT MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MICRONESIAN STUDENTS. IF THESE STUDENTS COMPLETE THEIR EDUCATION AND RETURN TO

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THE TRUST TERRITORY, THEY COULD NEVER GET A JOB IF THE CONGRESS APPROVED THIS BILL.

REP. DARD WEITAL OF PONAPE ALSO SPOKE AGAINST THE BILL. HE SAID THAT GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES THROUGHOUT THE TRUST TERRITORY HAVE CRITICIZED THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA WHENEVER SALARIES ARE NOT INCREASED. "I WOULD LIKE THE RECORD TO REFLECT THAT THIS BILL IS AN ADMINISTRATION BILL," WEITAL SAID.

REP. SASAUD HARUD SAID: "THE EFFECT THAT WE MIGHT BE FACED WITH AS A RESULT OF LACK OF HIRING COMPETENT PEOPLE TO BE UTILIZED IN (SUCH) AREAS LIKE PUBLIC HEALTH AND EDUCATION MIGHT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON (THESE PROGRAMS)."

ANOTHER PONAPEAN CONGRESSMAN, EDGAR EDWARDS, STATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS TRYING "TO PASS THE BUCK" TO THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA BY OFFERING IT TO THE CONGRESS TO ENACT. HE MAINTAINED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION COULD HAVE INSTITUTED A FREEZE WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE CONGRESS, "AND JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE AFRAID TO GET THE BLAME FROM THE PUBLIC THEY WANT THE CONGRESS TO DO THE ACTION FOR THEM," HE DECLARED. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL IS ALSO "DISCRIMINATORY" IN THAT CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE BILL.

REP. LAMBERT AAFIN OF TRUK, WHOSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS RECOMMENDED PASSAGE OF THE BILL, DEFENDED HIS COMMITTEE'S POSITION. HE

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SAID THE BILL DOES NOT PREVENT HIRING FOR THOSE POSITIONS THAT ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT AND WILL ALSO NOT PREVENT THE HIRING OF STUDENTS RETURNING FROM SCHOOL. HE COUNTERED REP. EDWARDS STATEMENT THAT THIS MEASURE WILL "IN NO WAY PUT THE BLAME ON THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA." HE ALSO REMINDED THE HOUSE THAT EARLIER THIS SESSION, IT PASSED A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON REDUCING SALARIES OF ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. "PASSAGE OF THIS BILL WILL ALLOW THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL ENOUGH TIME TO MAKE THAT STUDY," AAFIN SAID.

REP. KUNIWO NAKAMURA THEN MADE A MOTION TO POSTPONE ACTION ON THE BILL UNTIL NEXT YEAR. HIS MOTION PASSED.

THE HOUSE PASSED THREE OTHER MEASURES AND SENT THEM TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HIS CONSIDERATION. THEY ARE: TO MERGE THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS OF CIVIC AFFAIRS AND LEGISLATIVE LIAISON INTO A SINGLE DIVISION TO BE KNOWN AS THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION, (SB7-53); TO APPROPRIATE \$39,139 TO PROVIDE 25 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FUNDING OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE'S OPERATIONAL EXPENSES, (HB 7-26) AND TO EXTEND THE LIFE OF THE BASE SALARY SCHEDULE AND MARKET PLACE DIFFERENTIAL SCHEDULE APPLICABLE TO EMPLOYEES OF THE TRUST TERRITORY GOVERNMENT UNTIL OCTOBER 7, 1978, (SB 7-76).

THE SENATE TUESDAY (FEB. 15) REJECTED A BILL THAT WOULD MONETARILY PENALIZE CONGRESSMAN, WHO, WITHOUT AUTHORIZED EXCUSES FAIL TO ATTEND SESSIONS OR FORMALLY SCHEDULED COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD WHILE CONGRESS IS NOT IN SESSION, (SB 7-14).

THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS, HEADED BY SENATOR BAILEY OLTER OF PONAPE URGED THE PASSAGE OF THE BILL CITING ABSENTEEISM AS "AN EVER INCREASING PROBLEM IN THE CONGRESS." DURING THE EARLIER PART OF THE SESSION THE SENATE WAS WITHOUT A QUORUM FOR FIVE DAYS. "IN BOTH HOUSES ACTION HAS BEEN DELAYED BECAUSE SOME CONGRESSMEN FAILED TO ARRIVE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION," OLTER'S COMMITTEE REPORTED.

YAP SENATOR, JOHN MANGEFEL, IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, ASSERTED THAT CONGRESSMEN, LIKE OTHER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

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SHOULD NOT BE PAID IF THEY DO NOT WORK.

WHILE CONCURRING THAT "SIMILAR TREATMENT WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES" IS NECESSARY, SENATOR AMATA KABUA OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS REJECTED THE BILL IN FAVOR OF A MORE EXTENSIVE ONE.

BECAUSE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE "EXTENDED FAMILY" IN MICRONESIA THE BILL IS NOT APPROPRIATE, ARGUED PALAU SENATOR, KALEB UDUI, REFERRING TO A SECTION OF THE MEASURE STATING THAT ONLY THE DEATH OF AN IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER WOULD BE EXCUSABLE.

THE DEATH OF A MEMBER OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY, SUCH AS AN UNCLE, WOULD WARRANT HIS ABSENCE FROM THE SENATE, UDUI SAID, STATING THAT IN SUCH A CASE HE WOULD LEAVE REGARDLESS THE PENALTY.

SENATOR NICK BOSSY OF TRUK UPHELD AN EARLIER AGREEMENT MADE BY THE SENATORS IN AN EXECUTIVE SESSION. IT WAS DECIDED THAT AS SOON AS A SENATOR TAKES THE OATH OF OFFICE HE DRAWS A SALARY, WHETHER HE IS IN ATTENDANCE OR NOT.

VOTING FOR THE MEASURE WERE SENATORS MIROSI ISMAEL AND JOAB SIGRAH OF KOSRAE DISTRICT, SENATOR AMBILOS IEHSI OF PONAPE, AND SENATOR JOHN MANGFEL OF YAP.

VOTING AGAINST THE BILL WERE TRUK SENATORS, NICK BOSSY AND SENATE PRESIDENT TOSIKO NAKAYAMA, SENATOR UDUI, SENATOR KABUA, AND SENATOR PETRUS TUN OF YAP.

ABSENT FROM TODAY'S SESSION WERE SENATORS ROMAN THETUOHL OF PALAU AND BAILEY OLTOR OF PONAPE. ALSO MISSING WAS SENATOR WILFRED KENDALL OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, WHO ATTENDS SCHOOL ON THE MAINLAND. SENATOR KENDALL ARRIVED ON SAIPAN LAST WEEK AND WAS PROMPTLY SWORN INTO OFFICE. HE RETURNED TO THE MAINLAND ON MONDAY (FEB. 14).

A BILL TO APPROPRIATE \$80,000 FROM THE GENERAL FUND OF THE CONGRESS TO BE USED TO UPDATE AND REVISE THE EXISTING TRUST TERRITORY CODE (SB 7-63) PASSED IN THE SENATE WITHOUT DEBATE AND WAS SENT TO THE HOUSE. THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS REPORTED THAT "THE EXISTING CODE IS NOT ONLY OUT-OF-DATE, BUT ALSO AT TIMES ACTUALLY MISLEADING. SUCH A SITUATION WORKS AN INJUSTICE ON THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE TO BE GOVERNED BY THESE LAWS."

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SENT BACK TO THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION WAS A BILL PROVIDING THAT THE PROCEEDS OF A FORFEITURE AND SALE OF A VESSEL, PURSUANT TO A LIBEL ACTION, SHOULD BE PAID TO THE DISTRICT TREASURY WHERE THE SEIZURE OCCURRED, INSTEAD OF TO THE TRUST TERRITORY TREASURY, (SB7-39). THE COMMITTEE ORIGINALLY RECOMMENDED THAT THE BILL BE FILED, INSTEAD, IT WAS DECIDED THAT A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE BILL WAS IN ORDER.

CONSIDERATION OF TWO APPROPRIATION BILLS, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WAS DEFERRED UNTIL A LATER DATE, (HB 7-51, HD1 AND HB 7-48, HD1).

PASSED AND SENT TO THE SENATE WERE: A MEASURE TO APPROPRIATE \$250,000 TO RENOVATE AND CONSTRUCT TEMPORARY OFFICE FACILITIES ON PONAPE FOR USE BY THE TT HEADQUARTERS EXECUTIVE BRANCH; THE HIGH COURT AND THE CONGRESS OF MICRONESIA, (HB 7-15); AND A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE OFFICE OF DISASTER CONTROL, (HB 7-120).

THE HOUSE MEMBERS ALSO KILLED A BILL WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE EXPENSE ALLOWANCE OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS BUT WOULD ALSO DECREASE THEIR SALARIES, (HB 7-89), IN FAVOR OF A SIMILAR MEASURE BEING CONSIDERED BY THE JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE. (SILK REBUTS BALOS REMARKS ON MILNE)

SAIPAN, FEBRUARY 15 (MNS) -- HOUSE VICE-SPEAKER EKPAF SILK OF THE MARSHALLS TOOK THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TUESDAY AFTERNOON TO REBUT A STATEMENT MADE

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MONDAY (FEB. 14) BY REP. ATAJI BALOS CONCERNING THE MARSHALLS SEPARATION ISSUE.

BALOS, IN A SPEECH MONDAY, MADE REFERENCE TO JAMES MILNE, HEAD OF THE "VOICE OF THE MARSHALLESE" ORGANIZATION OPPOSING SEPARATION DURING A HEARING BEFORE THE U.S. CONGRESS SUB-COMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS CONDUCTED LAST JULY BY CONGRESSWOMAN PATSY MINK OF HAWAII AND CONGRESSMAN ANTONIO WON PAT OF GUAM. IN HIS STATEMENT, BALOS QUOTED MILNE AS SAYING HE (MILNE) HAD APPROXIMATELY 2,000 SIGNATURES OPPOSING SEPARATION AND THAT IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE A PHOTOCOPY OF THE PETITION BEARING THE SIGNATURES UNTIL A LATER DATE.

"IN THE INTEREST OF FAIR PLAY AND FAIRNESS TO HIM," SILK SAID, "I WOULD REQUEST THAT ANY STATEMENTS MADE ABOUT HIM IN THE (HOUSE) JOURNAL SHOULD BE RENDERED INOPERATIVE.

"...CRITICIZING HIM IN A CHAMBER OR FORUM WHERE HE (DOES NOT) EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO (REBUT) IS LIKE CRITICIZING A DEAD PERSON WHO CANNOT COME BACK IN LIFE TO DEFEND HIMSELF," SILK SAID.

THE VICE-SPEAKER ALSO SAID WITHOUT NAMING NAMES, THAT IT IS "UNFORTUNATE" THAT AN ADVISOR WHO CAME TO THE MARSHALLS TO "DISPENSE ADVICE" HAS TURNED AROUND AND "MEDDLES IN OUR AFFAIRS..." SILK SAID THAT AS A CONGRESSMAN, HE KNOWS WHAT "IS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE" HE REPRESENTS.

"THE QUESTION IS NOT WHO IS RIGHT; WHETHER THE MAJORITY IS RIGHT OR WHETHER THE MINORITY IS RIGHT. THE QUESTION IS WHAT IS RIGHT. IN ALL THE YEARS (THAT) I HAVE SERVED IN THIS CONGRESS, I FEEL AND THINK THAT I HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT," SILK POINTED OUT.