



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF TERRITORIES

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#### SELF-GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY STRESSED BY OFFICE OF TERRITORIES

The annual report of the Office of Territories issued today stresses the steady growth in self-government and local responsibility in areas under its jurisdiction.

One of the important functions of the Office of Territories, the report states, is to transfer its duties in Government, in economic aid, and in the development of educational and public health programs, to Territorial authorities as fast as these authorities are ready to take them over.

The Secretary's annual report emphasizes examples of the Department's success during fiscal year 1956 in adding to the responsibilities of Territorial governments by reducing Federal control.

Federal provision for the care of Alaska's mentally ill, instituted many years ago, will be transferred to the Territory on February 23, 1957.

The Alaska Road Commission has been transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Bureau of Public Roads of the Department of Commerce. The legislation providing for this transfer also extended to Alaska for the first time the benefits of the Federal-Aid Highway Program.

The Alaska Railroad will continue to be operated by the Federal Government. The railroad ended the fiscal year with a net income of more than \$2 million.

In the Pacific Islands--American Samoa, Guam, and the Trust Territory--Federal responsibilities are greater than in other Territorial areas, but in the last year the program to increase local control over local affairs showed continued progress.

During the fiscal year, another native islander advanced to a high-echelon Government position in one of the districts of the Trust Territory, and, in Ponape, the village of Kolcna became the first chartered town in Micronesia.

The economic base of American Samoa was greatly improved through the operation of a Government sponsored but privately owned and operated fish cannery. The output of this enterprise has tripled the value of American Samoa's annual exports.

The first commercial air service to American Samoa began operation during the year, and plans were advanced for a large international airport.

The program started in 1954 of transferring Federal public works in the Virgin Islands to local Territorial control was completed during the year.

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