

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by Mr. Bailey Oltor, Advisor,
U.S. Delegation to Trusteeship Council

Mr. President:

I should like to express my gratitude to our Administering Authority and to this Council for this opportunity to make a brief but uniquely Micronesian statement.

It is an honor to be here because we, the Micronesians, do recognize the importance of the United Nations and this Council. We recognize its importance by making its birthday a legal holiday.

Three weeks ago I toured my district with my fellow congressmen from Ponape District. In every place we visited, we concluded our meetings by asking the people their future political preference. Given several alternatives, the people invariably insisted that they wished to remain under the present system until they are ready in terms of educational standard, economic stability, political sophistication and social maturity and responsibility. The Micronesians are cautious and are reluctant to gamble for the price of uncertainty. When we are ready to accept the responsibilities and are aware of the implications and consequences of committing ourselves to whatever political status we prefer, we will ask for it.

In the words of the Micronesian who appeared before this Council last year, he stated--"It is like the papaya fruit--when it is ripe, it will show on the surface."

In the 1964 Report of the U.N. Visiting Mission to Trust Territory, the Micronesian students at the University of Hawaii stated--"Full understanding of the implications and consequences of choosing the future status of the territory required further preparation." In the same report, the Micronesian students at Guam College stated--"We propose to remain under the present administration and to learn more about self-government."

These quotations restate the trust these people have in this Council and our Administering Authority. They express a cautious but positive attitude of a young generation preparing and progressing toward the goal of self-determination. They are also important in that they represent the future determining factors of the territory now under review.

The challenge at present is whether the Micronesians, the Administering Authority, and this Council will be willing to make constructive evaluations, recommendations and implementations of such recommendations. The Territory at present looks to the United Nations and to the Administering Authority as that of a child to his parents. Each parent may have his or her own personal preferences as to the development of the child. But the crucial psychological issue is, what is best for the development of the child?

This Council is aware of the fact that the Trust Territory's natural resources are meager. The subsidies to support or initiate development programs are considered generous and are greatly appreciated but expanded programs and needs may necessitate even greater support.

Our needs for development are becoming greater than present resources. By recourse I refer to those we can raise locally as well as current assistance from our Administering Authority.

To make the best use of what we have available we must have long-range plans which may remain basically the same in order to ensure continuity with such changes as may be necessary. Such long-range plans may help our development in the long run. It may incorporate the different aspects of our development into a unity. It may eliminate the "trial and error" or the "wayside" fashion projects. Such a long-range plan will give our people a clear-cut picture to what is to be or not to be. This will eliminate confusion of priorities of projects and in the long run may help the territorial developmental aspects. I realize that long-range plans of this nature were hard to make in the past when public opinion and desires of our people were difficult to determine. But with the advent of the present Congress of Micronesia such plans should be made an essential part of its concern. I am very pleased, as are my fellow Micronesians, with the economic contract which will be developing a master plan for economic development.

The newly created Congress of Micronesia is an example of evolutionary and planned development. Several years ago it was only an advisory body whose members were appointed by the district administrator, later the district legislatures elected members to the Council of Micronesia, and now members are elected by universal suffrage. Its power has changed from one of a purely advisory capacity to a council electing its own chairman and power to make resolutions; now it has become a true territorial legislative body with power to levy taxes and to review the overall annual budget.

Its growth and transformation are significant in that the Administering Authority provided the advice and the Micronesians provided the basic desires, wishes and cooperation.

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This new Congress is highly regarded by the Micronesians for they feel that their elected representatives helped to create it and through it their voices now will be heard and listened to.

The intensity of the people in the creation of this Congress is evidenced by the percentage of voting. It is also evidenced by their celebrations and staying up late besides their radios to hear election results. The people's attachment to this Congress is shown by their enthusiasm in the meetings after the voting and the high courtesy and honor they have extended to the elected congressmen.

The challenge is now on the shoulders of the elected congressmen and the administration to help fulfill some of the simple but real needs of the people of Micronesia.

I endorse the statements made by fellow Micronesians who have appeared before this Council and therefore will not need to comment on details of what has already been accomplished in or said about our Territory.

I will reiterate, however, with emphasis the appreciation we have for the accelerated elementary school program launched several years ago. Where once loomed dilapidated elementary school buildings, we now have modern classrooms. In support of these buildings more and better qualified teachers have been recruited and are on the job. Our Micronesian teachers are also undergoing a program of further training to improve competency and performance.

The Micronesians recognize the immediate as well as the long-range benefits from the expanded program of development. On the short-range side, the program offers employment to those in the outer islands, and the outlying areas where copra is the only source of cash income. Income and community spirit arising from this program offer inducement to organized labor forces to venture into building housing and other cooperatives which will elevate the living standards of those concerned. It has also stimulated other groups to seek construction contracts for new schools and other projects and to accept the responsibilities under the terms of such contracts. These are but few of the many beneficial aspects of the program.

I am certain that similar and urgent programs in public health, in economic development and in other areas will benefit the people of Micronesia greatly.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the honorable members of the Council and trust that the Council will endeavor to make constructive evaluations and recommendations which our Administering Authority and the Congress of Micronesia may use as guidelines in all fields of growth--whether it be political, health, social or economic. I must say, again, that I am very grateful to our Administering Authority and to this Council for this opportunity to present this brief statement.

Thank you, Mr. President.