

PRESS RELEASE



TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Office of the High Commissioner

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Marianas

INTERIM COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS BEGIN PUBLIC HEARINGS

Tuck

Saipan, Mariana Islands, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Feb. 23 . . . After traveling throughout the Trust Territory, the Interim Committees of the Congress of Micronesia began public hearings on Saipan this week.

Ponape

On Monday they heard testimony from Attorney General Robert K. Shoecraft, Land Management Officer William A. McGrath and other members of the Land Management Office staff on such matters as redemption of Japanese savings bonds, homesteading, and compensation to landowners for damages incurred during building of the Ponape airfield.

Marshalls

Attorney General Shoecraft informed Congress that some payments for Japanese postal savings had been made by the Trust Territory between 1954 and 1957. The payments were to Micronesians holding postal savings books as proof of claims. He further noted that some \$25,000 from the proceeds of the former Pomeroy Ship Salvage Program had been used to redeem Japanese Government securities in addition to the postal savings.

Yap

Palau

According to Mr. Shoecraft the following total amounts were allocated for this purpose: \$6,000 to Koror; \$2,000 to Yap;

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\$4,000 to Truk; \$7,000 to Ponape; \$6,000 to Majuro; and \$5,000 to Rota.

Later in the day Land Management Officer McGrath told the Interim Committee members that the homesteading program had been halted until land utilization plans were effected. The Interim Committees unanimously agreed that the homesteading program must not be delayed much longer. Members from Ponape noted that money should not be an excuse for delay as the District Legislature of Ponape had appropriated a sum of \$20,000 for survey work to facilitate the homesteading program there.

Both Congress and the Land Management staff agreed that there was a great need for accelerating the homestead programs in all districts.

Possibilities of compensation for the damage resulting from preliminary construction of an airfield in Metalanim, Ponape, were raised by the Congressmen. They were told that funds for the settlement were not available at present and that there is a definite possibility of reallocation of funds in order to provide payment. The Congressmen were asked to encourage all claimants to file their damage claims at the earliest time.

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