

A Future for Micronesia

I very much welcome this opportunity to speak with you concerning Micronesia -- concerning the United States' Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

I welcome the opportunity for many reasons, at least three of which may bear repeating.

First, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is an important area, and the manner in which the United States assumes and discharges its responsibilities there is a matter of genuine significance in the world today. The area has 93,000 residents, and by any test, 93,000 people are important. These 93,000 people are the Interior Department's essential concern. At the same time, in 1947 the UN and the US agreed that our Trust Territory would be termed a "strategic" trust territory, and this action gave notice to the world that the United States regards the islands of Micronesia as important to its defense posture. To this the UN agreed, and provisions of our Trusteeship Agreement reflect that fact. As further testimony to the Trust Territory's importance, we have only to advert to the accepted fact that in vast areas of the earth today, the issue of colonialism is unquestionably the most compelling existing issue, the issue most capable of creating strong emotions and violent criticisms and severe antagonisms. Whether it is reasonable that this issue of colonialism should assume such importance is utterly beside the point. It is simply a fact that it does. And thus our performance in the Trust Territory matters very much in terms of the U. S. stance, both at home and abroad.

Secondly, I welcome this opportunity to speak with you because I believe, in all candor, that those of us engaged in the business of territorial administration suffer from a lack of critics. I think we would do a better job if a larger audience watched us and second guessed us and criticized us. I say this, notwithstanding the spate of recent articles and books published on the Trust Territory -- some of which have been, we think, utterly unreasonable -- because we need this spate, and more, in order to cause the right people in Washington, most particularly including all of us concerned with territorial administration, to direct our energies and our resources with new vigor and intensity to the massive job we have in the Trust Territory. So I believe we need critics, and many more of them, because only then will we have achieved the degree of public attention and public concern which is crucial to our getting on with the job. We hope all of you will join us in giving attention to Micronesia and in feeling concern about it, and if this takes the form of barbs, that, I believe, is one of the burdens we bureaucrats are paid to bear. This is not to say that we won't wince, and that we won't sometimes be outraged at the amount of energy that needs to be expended in responding to attacks. It is to say that we won't cause more people to care about Micronesia and what we're doing there, or we cannot hope to do a better job.

Thirdly, I am glad to turn to Micronesia with you today because I think the area and its problems and its challenges hold absolutely

infinite fascination. I have been in the business of territorial administration in the Interior Department for almost 17 years, and for over 16 of those years the Trust Territory has been part of Interior's bailiwick. Nothing about the Trust Territory has ever palled -- indeed, I am as anxious to get to my in-box these mornings as I was in 1951. I will hope, in the next several minutes, to convey to you some of the reasons for this unflagging fascination and enthusiasm.

I have agreed to direct my remarks to the subject of A Future for Micronesia. But I think that in doing this, I shall have to advert to its present and its past. While I know many of you to be knowledgeable about the Trust Territory, it seems wise to assume that others of you are not. In this connection, I am also bearing in mind an admonition that I recently saw painted on the wall of a conference room in the Veteran's Administration building in Washington. The VA wall told me that President Lincoln said, "If we could first know whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." So, best that we consider "whither we are tending".

The Trust Territory comprises 2000 islands, about 100 of which are actually inhabited. They cover an area coextensive in size with the boundaries of the original 48 States -- 3 million square miles, mostly of water. If all of the islands were pressed together in one lump, they would result in a land area about half the size of Rhode Island. These islands are the groups known as the Carolines, the

Marshalls, the Marianas, islands that were well known to American servicemen and to American newspaper readers, during World War II, for they were the scenes of some of the most sanguinary conflicts in history. Prior to the war, the islands were of course a Japanese Mandate under the League. ~~It has become fashionable to state that the Japanese between the wars did a better job in Micronesia than the Americans have since done - and in some respects, this may seem true, if the judgment is quantitative - but we are certain that this impression will soon be erased.~~

The population of these islands now numbers about 93,000, and that population is increasing at a very rapid rate, for the TF has one of the highest birth rates in the world. The natives of the area are largely Micronesians, although a small portion are Polynesian. Nine languages are spoken. We say that about 25% of the population speaks English, but this figure is misleading. Many of those whom we categorize as English-speaking do it so poorly that they can't really communicate. But whatever the percentage, it is now rising very rapidly, in light of our relatively new program of English instruction in the schools.

So that, in a few words, tells you of the area and the people that are our concern. What are we doing about this, as of today? I would like to give you quick answers, geared to four elements which I have selected in the hope that they will reflect something of a picture

of Micronesia today, and where we hope it is going. The elements are Federal funding, education, health, and political status.

First, let us consider the matter of United States fiscal support. Micronesia's own resources are so limited, and those that exist so largely untapped, that United States dollars constitute, as of this year, about 97% of the public resources of the territory. From the early 50's to the early 60's the United States Government spent about \$5,000,000 annually in the Trust Territory. That amount, necessarily, was spent largely to support the central government of the Trust Territory, then made up of about 150 Americans, and to support a modicum of governmental services. These services included the operation of surface and air transportation systems, which in themselves cost about \$1 million of the \$5 million available. Clearly, little was left over for imaginative or ambitious programs in education or health or economic development or much of anything else. Clearly, too, the effect of those years was to conduct a holding operation -- a tidy, well-intentioned holding operation -- but essentially a holding operation, nonetheless. Attitudes in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, in the Congress, and indeed, in Micronesia itself, during the 1950's indicated that this was sufficient.

It no longer seemed so in the early years of the following decade, and we succeeded in achieving, beginning in fiscal year 1963, a higher level of funding -- first \$15,000,000 and soon thereafter

\$17,500,000. By last year, it was utterly clear to us all that \$17,500,000 was grossly insufficient to finance the kind of program we knew needed to be undertaken. By that time, the entire \$17½ million was needed for the costs of annual administration -- for teachers salaries, for medical supplies, for an economic development beginning, and so forth. Not a cent remained for the capital improvements so sorely needed. This is not, of course, surprising. In 1963, the first year of our expanded program, about \$7,000,000 out of \$15,000,000 was available for capital improvements. In 1964, \$6,000,000 of \$17,500,000 was so available. But as schools and other facilities were built, the costs of operating them so bit into the sums available that, by last year, we were unable to seek any money at all for further facilities construction.

Like many other Federal agencies, the Interior Department in its Trust Territory concerns is faced not only with the need for annual appropriations, but also with the need for a prior statutory authorization to permit such appropriations. This we sought anew in 1966, with something short of total success.

Last year we sent to the Congress a dramatic new ceiling bill -- one which we said would meet our total needs for 5 years. The total price tag, we said, for the upcoming five years was \$324 million. The Congress balked, and I don't suppose we should have been surprised. In retrospect we see that we erred in many respects in looking so much so fast. The Congress did give us, ultimately,

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an authorization for a lesser amount, but one which doubled what we had had -- 25 million for the year just passed and 35 million for this year and next. However, after we achieved this authorization and turned to actual funding, we were also to be disappointed. For last year, instead of 25 million, there was actually appropriated to us only 19.2 million. For the present year, instead of 35 million, we have actually 24 million.

All of the foregoing has resulted in our own great big credibility gap in Micronesia - a gap between the cheerful picture we bureaucrats paint of where we're going and the dollars that we actually achieve for doing so - a gap between our stated goals and our means of achieving them.

In honesty, however, I must pause in my recital of our monetary problems of the last year with the Congress, to say that my Department does not take the position that the current ills in the Trust Territory are the responsibility of the Congress. This is the tack reportedly taken by a Time magazine man quoted a few days ago in Guam, following a Trust Territory trip. He stated, quite unequivocally, that the Congress has been at fault all these years, and I suppose he will say so one day soon in Time. But this just isn't true. Until last year, the Congress had appropriated every cent the Executive Branch sought through the years for the Trust Territory. From the early 1950's until last year we sustained no budget cuts of consequence. Accordingly, we in the Executive

Branch cannot pass this buck.

That, fiscally speaking, is where we are today.

Where we will be a year from today depends upon decisions as to a new authorization which are being made this very day in the Executive Branch; and upon decisions which the Congress will make, we hope early on in the 2d session of this 90th Congress, a Congress which is more frenetic about budgets than any in living memory. We could not escape going to the Congress for a new authorization next January if we chose to. Our authorization soon expires, so we must seek new authority. In determining the level that we will seek, we will necessarily assess again the needs of the Trust Territory, and we will do so with all the enlightenment and compassion that we can bring to the subject, but our conclusion will, also necessarily, have to be tempered by the realities of life on Capital Hill.

I would turn next to the element of education, an area which we have emphasized, some believe disproportionately, in recent years. Look briefly at the school situation before our recent accelerated program: until 1963, there was no central education effort, and schools and their administration were the responsibility of whatever political subdivision within the Trust Territory was willing to assume it. This usually meant the villages, the lowest level. The school teacher, almost always a Micronesian who was himself the product of the local school system, was paid whatever the village could afford --



a few hundred dollars a year at most, for the tax base available to municipalities was and is almost nonexistent. Buildings too were a local chore, so school was conducted in whatever structure might exist as a wartime leftover. It goes without saying that supplies were almost unavailable. Pencils were chopped in half to increase the supply. During the 1950's there was one, just one, qualified American school teacher in all of Micronesia.

Today there are 679 classrooms for elementary children throughout the Trust Territory. Of these, 285 we regard as unsuitable, but they exist and can be used and are being used for classroom instruction. Children are taught in classes with a 31/1 student-teacher ratio. Too high, of course, but not far off from most such Stateside ratios today. We understand that 96% of the elementary school age children in the Trust Territory are going to school. Their teachers are very largely Micronesians, and not technically nor actually well qualified, but they are enormously assisted by about 200 Peace Corps volunteers, who concern themselves largely with teaching English to the children, as well as to the Micronesian teachers.

As to the secondary level, as recently as 1962 there was one high school only in the Trust Territory, and it had an enrollment of 150. We have made progress here too, though surely not enough. There is now a high school in each of the Trust Territory's six districts, and the high school population exceeds 4000. The majority of their teachers are Americans, who meet the usually Stateside qualification

tests. There are now about 200 American school teachers in the Trust Territory.

Let this sound self-congratulatory, let me round the picture a bit by pointing out that at least half the graduates of the 8th grade cannot go to high school --- either because their elementary education was so inadequate as to preclude their doing so, or because notwithstanding their level of competence, there are no seats in high school for them. Many of their teachers, particularly at the elementary level, are themselves untrained, and until further training is provided for them, the educational achievements of the Micronesian children will be severely inhibited. Facilities will remain a problem. We expect to require 1300 elementary classrooms by 1973. We hope by then to be able to accommodate 11,000 secondary school students. Whether we can do this will depend, of course, upon whether we have funds available. At least as important, however, is what goes on in the classroom. We hope to improve vastly the level of educational content, this by more careful recruitment, by advanced training for native teachers, by acting upon the good advice which educators are now giving us. We expect to give new and more realistic emphasis to vocational training. All of these lie in the future, but in the nearer near future. All are dependent upon proper funding, but in the education area our case is a good one and one which our experience shows the Congress has found persuasive.

I propose to advert only briefly to our medical program. You will hear more of this, and from experts which I am not, during the afternoon. Where were we, say, in 1960? First, we had one doctor of medicine on the Trust Territory payroll, and no trained nurses at all. Today there are 10 M.D.'s, if one includes as one should the Peace Corps doctors who have generously agreed to serve in the district medical programs as well. We have 21 registered nurses. In 1960 we had 6 inadequate, ramshackel, buildings we call district hospitals. Today we have 3 inadequate, ramshackel, buildings we call district hospitals. All 3 of these are scheduled for early replacement. The other three are now. Their adequacy has been questioned, but they are indisputably better than what they replaced. In 1960, we obtained \$617,000 Federal dollars for our medical program in the TT - excluding capital improvements. We have this year \$3,386,000 for this purpose - a 5 fold increase. In 1960 almost no citizen of the Trust Territory had been innoculated against common diseases, while today we are approaching the reverse situation. A polio epidemic in the Marshalls in 1962 precipitated our immunization efforts, and many dozen Micronesian crippled children offer testimony to our failure to act sooner, but at this time an immunisation program is well advanced. We have also, too, taken the first steps toward creating protected water supply systems, and toward sanitary disposal facilities.

You will hear, as the afternoon passes, of the construction we must undertake, of new hospital buildings, of hospital improvements, of dispensary and other outlying medical facilities; you will hear of further recruitment of trained personnel, of training for our present staff, of procurement of more and better equipment, along with programs to keep it in operation. With all of this, I would say only, in short, we agree, and we mean to do our best to obtain the funds to permit it.

And, lastly, what of the future politically? Again, let us examine the present and the recent past. In 1965, for the first time in history the people of the Trust Territory went to the polls to elect a territory-wide legislative body, one with genuine legislative authority. Its power can be analogized to the power of territorial legislatures and state legislatures, except that, given the modest level of Trust Territory generated revenue, its budgetary power as a practical matter is limited. The Congress of Micronesia can and does appropriate locally raised revenues which range annually in the vicinity of \$700,000. But it does not act with respect to the appropriation of Federal revenues, since that is and has been the prerogative of the U. S. Congress.

The creation and the functioning of this legislature, known as the Congress of Micronesia, is surely our proudest achievement in the area of political development to date. The members of the Congress have impressed all observers with the high degree of responsibility and sophistication which they have brought to their tasks.

One of their actions, this in the summer of 1966, was to call upon the President of the United States to appoint a commission to consider the matter of the Trust Territory's future. The Congress of Micronesia, in its resolution, told us that "this generation of Micronesians should have an early opportunity to determine the ultimate constitutional and political status of Micronesia". Accordingly they sought "meaningful proposals of the political and constitutional alternatives open to the people of Micronesia".

Others, including the last two Visiting Missions from the Trusteeship Council of the UN, have said that it is too early to turn to the matter of Micronesia's future status, that it is too soon to ask the Micronesians what they want by way of political arrangements. We believed, however, that we should listen to the popularly elected representatives of the Micronesians, and thus that questions as to the political future must be answered now. On the basis of urging from the Executive Departments, the President in August sent forward to the U. S. Congress a proposed bill which would create a commission on the political status of the Trust Territory.

Unlike the standard Washington commission, or at least the standard public view of the standard Washington commission, this is not an effort to postpone the day of decision. Indeed, we have been enthusiastic about the commission approach because we see it as the only effective means of reaching the day of decision.

There is no doubt that the people of Micronesia must one day exercise their right of self-determination. The history of UN trust areas makes this clear, and indeed, it is the logical result of our commitments under our UN Trusteeship Agreement. We foresee that at that time, the Micronesians will be asked to decide whether they want sovereign independence, the route which almost all former trust areas have chosen. At the same time, we have good reason to suppose that large numbers of Micronesians see their political future as involving some form of association with the United States. Although we in Interior, and indeed, others all over the Executive Branch in Washington, can quickly run through the usual forms of political association, ranging from Statehood through Commonwealth to traditional territorial arrangements, we are reluctant to define the form for Micronesia because this is the Congress' prerogative. The Federal Constitution gives very clear power to the Congress to deal with precisely this question. In this case, of course, Congress will need to give due regard, additionally, to the special constraints of our U. N. commitment. Because the U. S. Congress alone can decide what form of association with the U. S. should be offered to the Micronesians, we are persuaded that any effort to define a form would be fruitless, in the absence of Congressional participation. We therefore seek an act of Congress, to authorize professional membership on the commission. Enactment of the bill will not only permit that membership, but would

also, more importantly, indicate the willingness of the Congress to entertain this question of Micronesia's political future.

So, we hope our bill will be passed. We hope for a plebiscite no later than June 30, 1972. We hope to offer the Micronesians reasonable alternatives, and ones so clearly defined that they will know fully what the options are. Bureaucrats are constitutionally reluctant to predict the fate of their favorite bills in the Congress, and I should refrain this time. But this time the situation is different, for three major Departments of government -- Interior, Defense, and State -- have agreed upon this commission course, and the President has himself used urgent language in presenting it to the Congress. There is good reason for optimism.

I will conclude by repeating myself. I appreciate your listening, because these seem to me to be important matters. I hope you will join our critics, because we need you. I hope you see why the Trust Territory is an unending source of fascination to us all. I hope you will agree that we've come some distance in recent years, and I know you will agree that our journey of a thousand miles has just begun. I hope you will join us in that journey, by offering us your guidance and your encouragement.

Funds Appropriated for Trust Territory Medical Services  
Exclusive of Construction

Source: Annual Budget Certifications

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1958               | \$576,000     |
| 1959               | 555,000       |
| 1960               | 617,000       |
| 1961               | 620,000       |
| 1962               | 575,000       |
| 1963               | 846,850       |
| 1964               | 1,350,000     |
| 1965               | 2,120,000     |
| 1966               | 2,367,500     |
| 1967               | 2,443,000     |
| 1968               | 3,386,700     |

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