

WTC
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The Tinian Moratorium:

Background

reductions on

Senator Kendall in his statement referred to the so-called "moratorium" in the development of land and other economic activity assets on Tinian which was allegedly instituted by the United States a year ago. This same "so-called" moratorium was also the subject of a resolution by the Congress of Micronesia in its last session in which it demanded immediate termination. A copy of this resolution was sent to the Trusteeship Council along with other pieces of individual correspondence on the subject. The subject may be raised in the question period.

Proposed US Response

have

reductions on

There has been no "moratorium" on economic development on Tinian; but there has been considerable misunderstanding, which needs to be cleared up for the record. The United States over the past year has continued to give priority consideration to steps for furthering economic development throughout the Marianas, including the island of Tinian and has taken no action to inhibit their healthy economic growth.

Issue

Business and farming on Tinian have continued in normal fashion. With regard to the use of land on Tinian, private individuals have been perfectly free to make such use of their land as they see fit and to transfer it to other citizens of the Marianas. The use of private land by non-Micronesians and the issuance of business permits to foreigners remains



subject to appropriate approval action by local boards and the administration just as it has been for many years. Where this has involved land whose future use is now the subject of ~~regulation~~ ^{negotiation}, action on issuance of new permits has been deferred until decisions on land could be reached between the negotiators.

With regard to public land the Marianas Political Status Commission, in anticipation of having all public land in the Marianas turned over to that district in the near future, has asked that no action be taken to alienate such land beyond a month to month tendency ^a without consultation with ~~it~~ ^{the Commission}. Additionally, in the case of applications for homesteads on public land which was the subject of ~~registration~~ ^{negotiation} it was felt that action should be deferred on the granting of new permits pending decision on the use of such land in order to reduce the risk of speculation. These decisions on land have now been made.

Applications for agricultural and village homesteads have continued to be processed during the past year, however, and titles to a number of lots occupied by homesteaders prior to the start of negotiations have been granted. In the case of village homestead some 15 permits are about to be issued.

None of this actually delayed the homestead program. A shortage of available funds has made it impossible to carry out necessary surveys of new agricultural homestead lots over a period stretching back well over a year ago. Without these



surveys, new permits could not have been issued~~x~~ in any event. Furthermore, it has been increasingly apparent to local authorities that a complete review of the homestead program is necessary throughout the Marianas. *No TT*

The District Administrator has just appointed a special land commission composed of representatives of both the executive and legislative branches to review the entire matter. The question of future homesteading policy throughout the Marianas is thus completely in the hands of the local authorities.

Additional Information

The "moratorium" on Tinian through mishandling became an emotional issue which grew out of all proportion to the actual merits or demerits of the situation. The U.S. did ask the High Commissioner to hold back final issuance of new permits in areas affected by the negotiations. This was undertaken because homestead lots had become the subject of vicious land speculation and this was threatening to become much worse.

In fact, it turned out that beyond initial processing the district could not handle the new applications then on hand in any event because of a lack of funds for surveys, which were being used elsewhere for higher priority projects. The number of homestead applications in fact increased dramatically in this last year, many of them highly suspect, and many mysteriously backdated to appear to have been filed ~~xxx~~ before the announcement of US requirements. (Almost every 18 year-old



in Tinian has apparently filed with little or no intention of ever farming the land.)

The District Administrator's appointment of a new land commission to study this whole question, including such matters as the bona fides of applicants, the extent of permissible holdings and the availability of land for homesteading throughout the Marianas has removed any real pressure on the United States. During Marianas IV the subject arose only indirectly and was referred pointedly to the Marianas Political Status Commission and the DISTAD, in whose lap the problem properly now rests.

