

The original documents are located in Box 11, folder “Johnston, Edward” of the Fernando E.C. De Baca Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

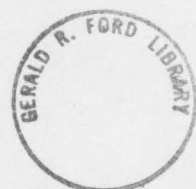
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald R. Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

"MICRONESIA - AMERICA'S CHALLENGE"
EDWARD E. JOHNSTON, HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE TRUST TERRITORY
OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS
COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF CALIFORNIA, MARCH 14, 1975

Distinguished members of the Commonwealth Club of California:

Some 7,000 miles from the West Coast of the United States lie a group of beautiful islands known collectively as "Micronesia." Among them are the Marianas, Marshalls and Carolines -- officially known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by the United States as a United Nations Trusteeship. Although unknown or little known to the vast majority of Americans, these beautiful little islands -- their present and their future -- present a very real challenge to the United States of America.

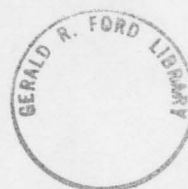
As a Trusteeship, the Trust Territory of the Pacific now occupies a rather unique position in two respects. First, of the eleven original U. N. Trusteeships, only one, the one which we are discussing today, was classed as a "strategic" Trusteeship and was placed under the Security Council of the United Nations rather than under the General Assembly, as were the other ten Trusteeships. The United States, as the administering authority of this strategic Trusteeship, was very clearly permitted, if necessary, to fortify the area and to maintain a military presence in the area, in the interest of world peace in the Pacific. The second unique feature is that, at this point in time, it is now, for all practical purposes, the only remaining Trusteeship, since Papua-New Guinea, administered by Australia, is completely self-governing and is scheduled to become totally independent within the next few months.



Each year the United States, as the administering authority, must report to the Trusteeship Council on its administration of the Trust Territory and every third year the member nations of the Trusteeship Council appoint a visiting mission which spends some six weeks in the Trust Territory and then files its report with the U. N.

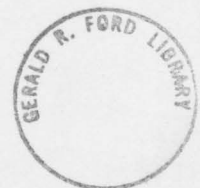
The Government of the Trust Territory is patterned after that of the United States with three separate branches; the executive, which is headed by a High Commissioner, appointed by the President of the United States, with the confirmation of the United States Senate; a legislative branch which consists of a popularly elected Congress of Micronesia, with twelve senators and twenty-one representatives. The judiciary consists of a high Court with a Chief Justice and three Associate Justices, all appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, to whom the Trust Territory is assigned for administrative purposes, and a local judiciary of District Judges, all of whom are Micronesian citizens without the benefit of formal legal training.

Although travel writers in referring to our Islands normally call them a "paradise of the South Pacific", geographically all of the Islands are located above the equator and are actually in the northwestern (rather than the south) Pacific. The area encompassed within our jurisdiction is more than 3,000,000 square miles of ocean, an area larger than the continental limits of the United States. Within this vast expanse of water are some 2,100 islands, only less than 100 of which are inhabited. The total land area involved is only about 700 square miles -- less than half the size of the State of Rhode Island. Micronesia is populated by 114,000 persons, who based on the



anthropological scale of three major racial extractions (Caucasoid, Negroid or Mongoloid) are of Caucasoid derivation. They speak nine totally different languages, plus several variations of those nine, with English and to a certain extent Japanese as their common languages.

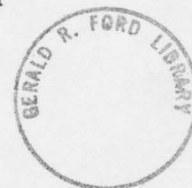
Basically, the area is somewhat unique in world history in that for two centuries the Islands have been more-or-less held together as an enforced, unnatural union of somewhat similar, and yet in many ways dissimilar, island groups. During this period of time, they have been under the administration of Spain, Germany, Japan and now, the United States. It is interesting to note that each of these four nations appears to have had a different motivation toward and interest in this group of islands which we now call the Trust Territory of the Pacific. Spain, after Magellan discovered the islands in the 1500's, was interested primarily in religion and converted a great many of the islanders to Catholicism. Spain exhibited very little commercial interest in the islands, but did maintain a presence there until approximately 1900. The islands at that time were sold to Germany and during the brief German administration the interest was primarily a commercial one. The Germans operated a cable station, reprovisioning stations for their merchant fleet, and to a certain modest degree began to colonize the islands. At the end of World War I, Germany lost the islands to Japan under a mandate from the League of Nations. I am sure all of you know that the Japanese, in complete violation of the League of Nations mandate, proceeded not only to colonize the islands, but to fortify them in complete dedication to building their



war-machine before and during World War II. You are also familiar with the bloody history of these islands during World War II, and the fact that the United States secured the various island chains in 1944-45 and accepted the United Nations Trusteeship in 1947.

Certainly it takes no great degree of research to envision that governing these islands as a single entity has never been and never will be an easy task. In fact, in a recently published book entitled "The Office of Territorial Affairs" by Mrs. Ruth G. VanCleve, who formerly headed that office, the chapter entitled "The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands" begins with the following words: "It is possible that the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, as a political entity, is ungovernable. It may be that it covers too large an area, that its people are too disparate, that their aspirations are too diverse."

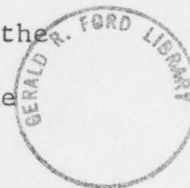
Some have even said that Micronesians may be the most over-governed people in the world, because in addition to three layers of government (the Trust Territory headquarters, the district administration -- in each one of the six administrative districts and well over 150 chartered or unchartered municipalities), in all districts except the Marianas you must superimpose on this governmental structure the traditional or hereditary leaders who still exercise a tremendous amount of influence throughout the islands. Some of the traditional leaders have bridged the gap by also becoming elected leaders. A good example of this was the late Chief Petrus Mailo who was not only the undisputed high chief of the Truk District, our most populous district with over 30,000 residents, but he was also for many years the elected mayor of Moen Island which is the seat of the Truk District government.



So much for what Micronesia is, where it is, and its basic background throughout the centuries. Along with considering what Micronesia is, it may be of equal importance for us to consider what Micronesia is not. Micronesia is not a territory or possession of the United States and various Federal Courts have ruled many times that it is "not an agency or entity of the United States Government." Micronesians are not United States citizens, or United States nationals, they travel on their own passports, and even tariff barriers exist between the islands and the United States. Nevertheless, the area is United States administered under the Trusteeship and, almost entirely United States financed. Of total governmental expenditures of some \$80,000,000 this year, only slightly over \$5,000,000 comes from locally generated revenues.

The United States owns no land in Micronesia, but those lands which are used for public purposes or governmental purposes are held by the United States as trustee for the people of Micronesia. At the present moment, based on an administrative directive issued by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton in January 1975, the framework has been created to return all public lands to control of each of the individual districts, if they so desire, even before the Trusteeship is ended. Not only does the United States own no land in Micronesia but due to very strict non-alienation laws no one other than a native-born Micronesian citizen can under any circumstances own land in any of the islands. Land can be leased for short or relatively long periods of time, but it cannot be sold to a non-Micronesian.

So much for background material. I am certainly well aware of the fact that the members of this distinguished organization did not come



here today to listen to geographical descriptions, vague phrases or general platitudes concerning any area, even one as remote and fascinating as Micronesia. So in the remaining time available today, let's review what the United States as the "administering authority" has and has not done to fulfill its mandate under the 1947 United Nations Trusteeship Agreement.

To quote from Article 6 of the Trusteeship document, The United States was charged with and freely accepted the responsibility to, and I quote:

"1. Foster the development of such political institutions as are suited to the Trust Territory, and shall promote the development of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory towards self-government or independence, as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Trust Territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; and to this end shall give to the inhabitants of the Trust Territory a progressively increasing share in the administrative services in the Territory; shall develop their participation in government."

The administering authority also agreed to "promote the economic advancement and self sufficiency, the social advancement and the educational advancement of the inhabitants."

So you might logically ask, how well has our nation lived-up to its responsibilities under this Trusteeship Agreement. In my opinion, in many ways we have done quite well. Although in other areas we have undoubtedly not measured up to the responsibilities we so freely accepted.

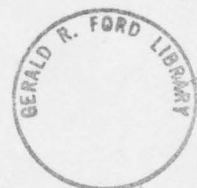
One area in which we have certainly measured up to our responsibilities is in the fields of health services and education. Perhaps one measure of



the success of the health services program in Micronesia is that we have maintained a better infant mortality rate and general mortality rate than have the American Indians, at an expenditure of approximately \$72.00 per year, per person, compared to some \$329.00 per person spent by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the Indian health services program. The health services program is headed by a Micronesian at the Territorial level and in each of our six districts and we have recently, in cooperation with the Medical Department of the University of Hawaii, completed a very successful Medex program to train para-professionals to an extent just below that of a doctor. These Medex's have been and, I am sure will continue to be, helpful in maintaining health services at an adequate level in some of our remote outer islands, many of whose residents have never even seen an electric light. We also have made great strides in the past few years in a Territory-wide immunization program and in health education for the students in our public schools.

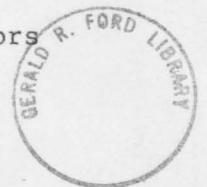
Our public school system provides an education through the 12th grade for almost every student who wishes to attend, and almost 60% of our secondary educational effort is now directed toward vocational education. In the Palau District we operate the Micronesian Occupational Center which offers vocational education at both the high school and post-high school level in many fields such as automobile mechanics, air-conditioning mechanics, electricians, carpenters, masons and many others. It has also provided very valuable training in the service industries which are related to our growing tourism throughout the area.

We have in Micronesia only one institution of higher learning, the Community College of Micronesia in Ponape, which now grants an A.S. degree



in both elementary teaching and in nursing. Our nursing school, which is physically located in Saipan in the Marianas District, has just recently been officially combined with the Community College of Micronesia. In addition to this small, but growing college which now has only less than 200 students, it is frequently pointed out that the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands undoubtedly has more college graduates and more young people attending colleges outside the Territory than any other Pacific Island area. This fact is both a benefit and a challenge: - A benefit in that we are building a large reservoir of highly trained individuals who at the present time seem totally dedicated to returning to Micronesia to be of service to their own people. But also a challenge, to see how long we can maintain such a level of college education and still keep the young people returning to Micronesia rather than suffering the so-called "brain-drain" which has afflicted many other island areas of the Pacific, as well as rural communities throughout the entire world.

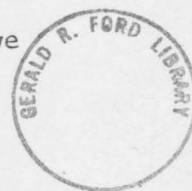
America can be extremely proud of her record in training the Micronesians for self-government. Municipalities have been chartered since the early 1950's and this year the Congress of Micronesia celebrates its 10th anniversary, having been founded in 1965. During those ten years the Congress has steadily taken on increasing powers and responsibilities. Members of the Congress now participate actively in the budget process and, in fact, approve and help present the budget submissions which must go before the United States Congress each fiscal year. They have the power of advice and consent over 37 of the most critical positions in the government, such as the District Administrators



and the Members of the High Commissioner's Cabinet and their deputies. Although there is still some unhappiness about the fact that the Secretary of the Interior has, under certain circumstances, eventual power over legislation, they have, as I said, been given greatly and steadily increasing powers. As one example, my immediate predecessor could introduce legislation, simply mark the bill "urgent" and if a session of the Congress failed to act upon it, he could declare it a law without the approval of the Congress. This is no longer true and the veto power of the High Commissioner has been greatly restricted, as it should have been, in the gradual process toward self-government.

One of the main missions of every American working in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands is to work himself out of a job by training a capable and well-qualified Micronesian to take his place. This is even true of the position of the High Commissioner himself. The Congress of Micronesia is, of course, by its very nature completely composed of Micronesian citizens, and Micronesians are playing an ever increasing roll of prominence in the judiciary and in the executive branch. When I became High Commissioner just six short years ago there were no Micronesian District Administrators, today all six are Micronesians. There were no Micronesian department heads at the territorial level. Today, five of our eight major operating departments are headed by Micronesians, and two of the remaining ones have Micronesian deputies, who will undoubtedly become directors of their departments soon.

But while we have made such great strides in the training of Micronesians and preparing them for their eventual future, I think we



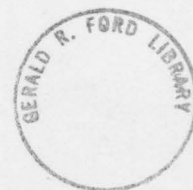
must very frankly admit that the United States has lagged far behind in physical improvements needed to fully support the trend toward eventual self-government. For the first several years of the Trusteeship the total budget for this vast area was only \$1,000,000 annually and a great deal of that went to support the Trust Territory Headquarters which was then located in Honolulu. In fact in the first 23 years of the Trusteeship (1947 through 1969) the average expenditures were only some \$9,000,000 per year. In the last six fiscal years, fiscal 1970 through 1975, this has gone up to an average of \$57,000,000 per year, plus an average of some \$8,000,000 a year in additional support from other federal programs under such agencies as HUD and HEW.

In fact it is quite shocking to visitors to our area for the first time that in many respects in almost 30 years the United States has not even replaced some of the infrastructure which we destroyed of necessity during World War II. You must realize, of course, that physical improvements in Micronesia are very expensive; for more so than in the average mainland community. You must remember that because of the vast distances between and among our six administrative districts that so many things which a normal government within the United States system would do once we must do six times. Not one fire truck, but six; not one ambulance, but six. All of this for a total population of only 114,000 persons. For those of you who feel that inflation is plaguing you here on the Mainland, you might bear in mind that within a period of just a few months last year the cost of reinforcing bars increased by more than 150% in Micronesia, the cost of a bag of cement by over 200%, the cost of petroleum products almost tripled. This meant that if we had budgeted \$1,000,000 for oil



to run our ships and electric power generators, we were faced with an actual expenditure of almost \$3,000,000. This has made our job even more difficult than it was before.

Economic development, to make Micronesia a more self-supporting and really viable economic entity, has also lagged far behind other areas. All of us most familiar with the situation feel that there are three logical areas for development. (1) The growing field of tourism, and I might say here that each district has its own tourism advisory commission and in each district tourism will develop at the rate of progress and under the controls imposed by the citizens of that district. (2) There is a vast potential income, some have estimated it as high as \$300,000,000 a year, in fisheries (particularly skip-jack tuna) throughout our 3,000,000 square miles of ocean and methods must be found of arranging viable joint ventures with major corporations from the United States or other countries, so that this vast marine potential can be harvested. (3) Since our imports greatly exceed our exports and since to become a viable, self-sustaining economy Micronesia must reduce this ratio, in the field of agriculture we can become much more self-sufficient. Great progress has been made in the past few years in raising cattle, pigs, chickens, (several districts are already totally self-supporting in chicken and egg production) and in raising fruits and vegetables which no longer need to be imported from the United States or Japan. In fact, we have even begun to develop somewhat of an export market to nearby Guam, which although it is geographically and physically located within Micronesia is a United States' territory, and to Japan.



Having now surveyed the past and present of Micronesia, what of the future? The fledgling Congress of Micronesia in 1968 formed its first future status committee and this committee toured many parts of the world discussing various forms of government with government leaders, and filed its report with the Congress. On the basis of that report, in mid-1969 the United States began status negotiations with representatives of the Congress of Micronesia. Although I have not actively participated in these negotiations, I have been kept very well briefed by Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, the President of the San Francisco-based Asia Foundation, who for the past several years has served as the President's personal representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, and by Senator Lazarus Saliif of the Palau District, and Representative Ekpap Silk of the Marshalls District, the co-chairman of the Congress of Micronesia's Joint Committee on Future Status. Actually, since 1973 the United States has been conducting two separate sets of negotiations, one with the Marianas District who seem headed toward a commonwealth status in very close association with the United States; and another set of negotiations with the balance of the Trust Territory leading toward what the Congress of Micronesia has called "free association" with the United States.

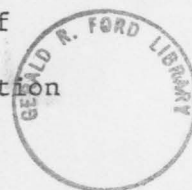
As for the negotiations with the Marianas Islands, on February 15, just less than one month ago, representatives of the Marianas Political Status Commission and Ambassador Williams on behalf of the United States, signed a covenant to establish "a commonwealth of the northern Mariana Islands in political union with the United States of America." Within a few weeks after the signing, a second step was completed, when the



Marianas District Legislature voted unanimously to accept the commonwealth covenant. The next step will be a plebiscite probably in June 1975 in which the citizens of the Marianas District can freely express their wishes. If the Marianas do vote for the commonwealth status as they have indicated their preference in several unofficial referendums in the past, it is anticipated that the Marianas District will then be administered separately from the balance of the Trust Territory for such time as the Trusteeship is still in existence.

The concept of free association which is being negotiated with the other five districts of Micronesia, envisions a Micronesia which would be totally self-governing, electing all of its own officials, but under a "compact of free association" with the United States. The United States Government would provide for defense and handle foreign affairs for Micronesia and would continue to provide a major level of financing for a certain agreed-upon period of years. The level of this financing is still under negotiation. Nevertheless, President Ford's administration, through Secretary Morton, is asking the Congress of the United States to approve a Capital Improvements Program calling for the expenditure of some \$145,000,000 in fiscal years 1975 thru 1980, designed to put in place at least a basic infrastructure for the Micronesians prior to the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and their emergence as a self-governing entity.

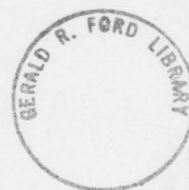
Meanwhile, under an act passed by the Congress of Micronesia last year, the first Micronesian Constitutional Convention will convene on the Island of Saipan on July 12, 1975, the exact tenth anniversary of the founding of the Congress of Micronesia. Delegates to the convention



have already been elected, and a preconvention committee, with representatives from each administrative district, has made great progress toward organizing the convention. Although there is some talk of further separatist movements among some of the districts, there is still a strong hope that the balance of Micronesia can be held together as one entity and the United States is proceeding in the negotiations with that assumption in mind. Many of us, both Micronesians and Americans, are hopeful that the Constitutional Convention will be a productive one and that all areas of what now constitute the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands may soon be firmly on the road to self-government and the eventual dissolution of the Trusteeship.

So now that we have discussed the wide range of problems and challenges in Micronesia, you may well agree that in this remote Territory, where almost 50% of the population on the outer islands still live under relatively primitive conditions, you and I as American citizens do face a very great challenge -- the challenge of being the last of the great nations of the world to dissolve a Trusteeship and to bring a group of people, who have never before enjoyed the privilege, into the full realm of self-government which they so richly deserve.

As you came to this luncheon meeting today, many of you may well have asked yourselves why the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory was on a list of such otherwise outstanding and distinguished speakers including several Presidents of the United States? Well, perhaps you've learned something about a very remote and frequently misunderstood area and at least you have listened to the only remaining American citizen to bear the title of High Commissioner, and the only American who serves as Chief Executive of a foreign country.



The position of the High Commissioner is subject to about as many external pressures as any job man could devise. Among those to whom he is accountable, in addition to the Secretary of the Interior and President of the United States are the United Nations, the Congress of the United States, the Congress of Micronesia and his dual constituencies in Micronesia and in America.

I was not too surprised, therefore, when the wife of a young minister from Hawaii wrote me from New York shortly after my first appearance at the United Nations Trusteeship Council saying, "Congratulations, I guess, on being the perpetual 'man in the middle'." And my good friend, Joe Murphy, editor of Guam's Pacific Daily News, recently commented in his daily column, "Trying to be a good American High Commissioner, and still look out for the interests of the islands, may be the world's most difficult job. The nearest to it would be an Arab mayor of Jerusalem or a Jewish mayor of pre-war Berlin. It's a case of if you do, you're damned, if you don't, you're damned, and if you sit on the fence, you're doubly damned."

It is a challenge, and one I have truly enjoyed for almost six years. It is not only a challenge for the High Commissioner, but a challenge for every American in the Executive Branch of the United States Government, in the Congress of the United States, and among the population in general. I, for one, believe we are at long last meeting that challenge. I thank you most sincerely for inviting me to speak to you today and look forward particularly to the question and answer period which will follow.

