

Micronesia's Coming of Age: The Mormon Role in Returning Micronesia to Self-Rule

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Abstract

Mormons, or members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have a distinguished history of service in the U.S. government. During a forty-year period following World War II, Mormon politicians played vital roles in transitioning several islands in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from a quasi-colonial status into the self-governing Federated States of Micronesia. This article briefly traces the complicated transition through the public service of four key Mormon administrators: Elbert D. Thomas, John A. Carver Jr., Stewart L. Udall, and Morris K. Udall. They served respectively as first civilian high commissioner of the Trust Territory, Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and chair of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee with oversight for the Pacific.

Keywords: decolonization, Micronesia, Guam, Mormon, self-determination, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Pacific War, World War II

Introduction

After centuries of indigenous self-rule, the people of Micronesia passed through colonial control by Spain (mid-1500s to 1899), Germany (1899–1914), and Japan (1914–44). Then World War II brought devastating battles between the Japanese and Allied forces, severely impacting the people of the Pacific.

After World War II, the United Nations recognized the need to rebuild Micronesia's infrastructure and in 1947 formed a strategic trusteeship called the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Presidents Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford, and Reagan generally oversaw the Trust Territory during the four decades of 1947 to 1986. Specifically guiding the Trust Territory were four key Mormon politicians: Elbert D. Thomas, John A. Carver Jr., Stewart L. Udall, and Morris K. Udall. This paper will briefly trace the contributions of these politicians in fostering self-determination, focusing primarily on what later became the Federated States of Micronesia, consisting of Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae. During the decades of 1947 to 1986, the interim government slowly rebuilt the economic and educational infrastructure, respecting local customs, protecting religious freedom, and gradually returning the islands to self-government. Toward the end of this period, Mormon missionaries began spreading through Micronesia, offering an alternative to churches that some view as traditional colonial influences: the Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations.

Within the context of global politics, why does this story matter?

1. It's a story of U.S. vested interests involving national security and, ultimately, billions of dollars.
2. It's a story of competing demands and criticism from the United Nations, from the Cold War Soviet Union, from Micronesians themselves, and from U.S. presidents, Cabinet members, Senators, and Representatives.
3. It's a complicated and turbulent story of disparate Micronesian islanders uniting to assert independence from a controlling father figure.

Pacific War, Nuclear Testing, and Initial Reconstruction

The Pacific War devastated the people of Micronesia. “Under Japanese military control,” wrote historian Lin Poyer, “Micronesians were subjected to harsh discipline, forced labor, relocation, and the confiscation of farm products. Some men were drafted into the military and took part in the fighting. Other men, women, and children worked on military construction and picked up the load of extra labor to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and the Japanese soldiers and civilians living with them. Micronesians also suffered the danger and destruction of Allied military attack, and the material shortages and psychological pressures of the war years” (1991, p. 79).

The U.S. military spread westward like a hurricane, wreaking destruction on islands with Japanese military installations—specifically Kwajalein, Mili, and Wotje in the Marshall Islands; Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Chuuk in the Eastern Carolines; Angaur, Koror, and Pelelieu in the Western Carolines; and Guam, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian in the Northern Marianas (Hanlon, 1998, p. 26).

In August 1945 the U.S. unleashed the new terror of nuclear weapons on Japan, ending the Pacific War very abruptly. After Japan’s surrender on September 2, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur issued General Order No. 1, asserting control over Japanese mandate islands. U.S. forces sporadically began to occupy islands, delivering food and supplies, and gradually rebuilding the damaged infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military machine was churning out and testing weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear testing began in 1946 on Bikini and Eniwetok atolls in the Marshall Islands. Until 1958 some 67 tests were conducted, causing severe health risks for the people of the Marshall Islands (Skoog, 2003, p. 69) and initiating Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union.



The “Baker” explosion, part of Operation Crossroads, a nuclear weapon test by the U.S. military at Bikini Atoll on July 25, 1946. Photo in public domain.

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On April 12, 1947, in a more peaceful setting, the United Nations formed the strategic Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, to be administered by the United States. Article 6 of the Trusteeship Agreements, presented on July 7, 1947, outlined several clear objectives:

1. Foster the development of political institutions as are suited to the trust territory. . . .
2. Promote economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants. . . .
3. Promote the social advancement of the inhabitants, and to this end shall protect the rights and fundamental freedoms of all elements of the population without discrimination. . . .
4. Promote the educational advancement of the inhabitants. (p. 52)

The U.S. Navy would shoulder the initial burden. In a May 3 editorial titled “Let’s Not Civilize These Happy People,” Rear Admiral Carlton H. Wright (1947, p. 23) mentioned the area’s natural beauty, adequate food and shelter, and lack of economic disparity. He helped construct many schools and argued for English as a lingua franca. His replacement, Admiral Leon S. Fiske, believed that Micronesians’ hereditary chiefs were the appropriate power structure and that the U.S. position should be to “advocate self-government, not necessarily democracy” (as cited in Richard, 1957, 3:385).



Rear Admiral Leon S. Fiske leaving the Trust Territory, July 27, 1951, shown with Captain T. C. Thomas (left) and High Commissioner Elbert D. Thomas. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai‘i–Manoa Library.

Educational Efforts in the 1950s: High Commissioner Elbert D. Thomas

In the 1950s the Departments of Defense, Interior, and State contended who might best control that the Trust Territory and how to promote economic and political stability. “Defense would have preferred an outright annexation of Micronesia,” wrote Robert C. Kiste, then director of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai‘i. “However, Defense control of the Trust Territory passed to the Department of Interior in 1951. For many years, Interior had

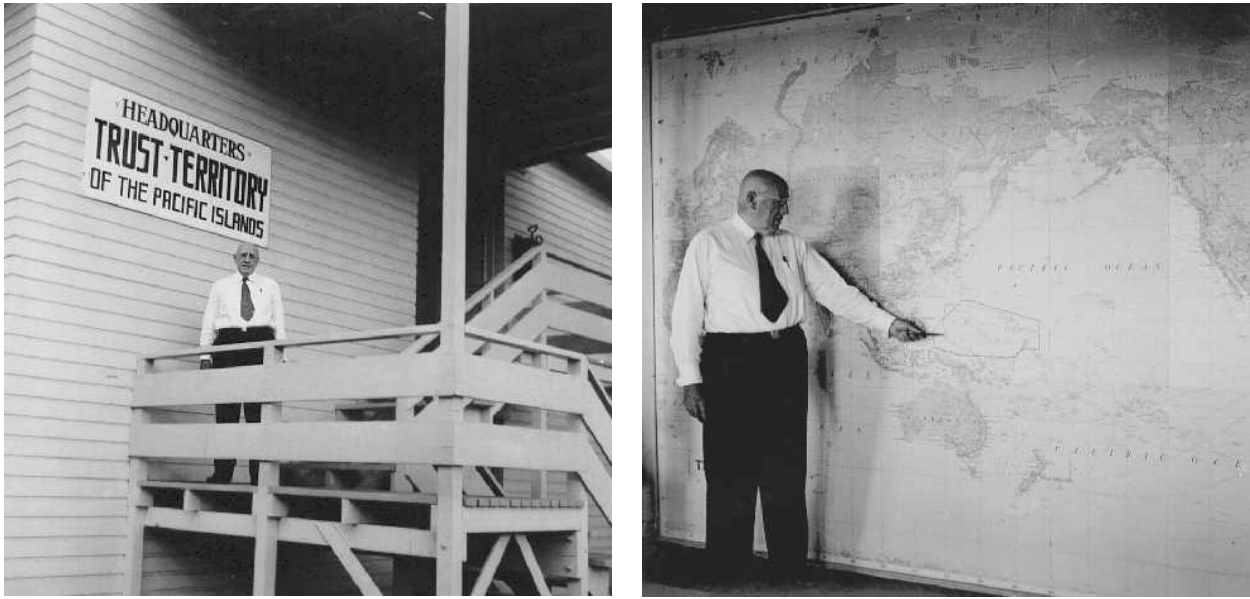
been responsible for American Samoa, Guam, and other American territories. [Interior] also had strong advocates in Congress, was reluctant to relinquish any turf or authority, and was often insensitive to the issue of decolonization. In contrast, the Department of State was concerned that the United States not acquire new territory as a result of the war and wanted a political solution that would be acceptable to the international community” (Kiste, 2001, p. 587).

Under the Department of the Interior, Elbert D. Thomas, a former senator from Utah, was appointed the first civilian high commissioner in 1951. The onetime professor of political science at the University of Utah had defeated Reed Smoot in 1932 and had served in the Senate from 1933 to 1951. During that time he served as a member of the Senate Steering Committee, the chair of the Committee on Education and Labor, and a ranking member of the Military Affairs Committee (Iguchi, 2007, p. 79).

Senator Thomas had loved the Japanese people since his missionary service. One of the first Mormon missionaries to Japan, he had served from 1907 to 1912, including as a mission president supervising all missionaries there. When war broke out in the Pacific, he broadcast messages to the Japanese to convince them of U.S. goodwill and to encourage them to surrender (Ex-Senator, 1953, p. A-26). As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, Senator Thomas remained deeply critical of the use of nuclear weapons against Japan.

Throughout his career, Thomas advocated peace. He also encouraged removal of European colonial forces from the Pacific, asserting, “The days of the white man’s domination are over and the British Empire is almost certain to be dissolved in that part of the world” (as cited in Hachey, 1973–74, p. 141). These views made him unpopular with some, leading to his 1950 defeat as a senator but making him an excellent candidate for high commissioner.

As the highest-ranking civilian authority in the Pacific, Thomas led a small but powerful team from Honolulu. The distance to Guam’s capital city of Agaña (Hagåtña) was 3,800 miles (2,100 km). That would be like governing Washington, D.C., from London! Father Francis X. Hezel, a leading Jesuit scholar on Micronesia, noted that Thomas proposed relocating the Trust Territory headquarters in Saipan, but the budget did not allow for construction of new facilities (1995, p. 284).



High Commissioner Thomas at Trust Territory headquarters in Honolulu. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai'i–Manoa Library.

In 1952 Interior proposed a budget of \$10 million that was slashed to \$4.8 million, so Thomas had to keep the staff size small. Thomas led a team of 26 headquarters staff members and from 15 to 20 members in each of the six districts. Under Thomas, the interim government pledged to respect the “existing customs, religious beliefs and property rights” and to promote “freedom of conscience” and “freedom of worship and of religious teaching” (United States Navy Department, 1948, pp. 116–17).

Thomas’s overarching objectives of empowering the people of Micronesia greatly influenced U.S. national policy decisions. With the exile of Japanese businessmen after WWII, many Micronesian industries had collapsed, and in their place grew “a society of clerks and secretaries” (Hezel, 1995, p. 331). That is to say, government employment (including teaching jobs) became the new economic power structure of Micronesia. From the beginning, Thomas’s policy was to hire Micronesians instead of Americans whenever possible (Hezel, 1995, p. 291).

Thomas became concerned about the nuclear testing. In 1952 he and a delegation discussed the displacement of the people of the Bikini Atoll with Gordon Dean, chair of the Atomic Energy Commission. And on February 5, 1953, High Commissioner Thomas wrote a letter to James P. Davis, director of the Office of Territories at the U.S. Department of the Interior, protesting the military’s proposal to extend nuclear testing to the uninhabited Ailinginae Atoll. He apparently thought the testing would not endanger inhabited atolls, but he worried that destruction of the island and fishing grounds would make the Rongalepese less self-sufficient and more dependent on the U.S. government (as cited in *Consequential Damages*, 2008, pp. 95–96).

Unfortunately, Thomas died unexpectedly on February 11, 1953. Praise for his leadership echoed throughout Micronesia, Hawai‘i, Utah, and Washington, D.C. Alfred M. Hurt, acting deputy high commissioner, praised Thomas’s efforts in advancing the islands toward self-government: “No one believed more in the United Nations’ approach to the solutions of world problems. No one was better fitted to assume the over-all direction of such an idealistic yet

practical arrangement for government as developed in the Trusteeship Agreement” (*Memorial*, 1956, p. 79).

Dr. H. L. Marshall, Trust Territory medical director, wrote, “High Commissioner Thomas dealt lightly with this vast authority. He was in fact the architect of its broad, human policies, but he deliberately chose the role of wise and interested counselor on all the details and concerns of administration.” Marshall added, “If the experiment succeeds as he wished it to succeed, and as he helped to make it succeed, the whole era of imperialism and of colonial exploitation of native peoples is at an end, and a new era is dawning in the world” (*Memorial*, 1956, 82).

If he had lived longer, one can only speculate how his service might have benefited the people of the Trust Territory. He was widely respected by the Micronesians with whom he interacted. Dwight Heine, a Marshallese student who later became district administrator of schools for the Marshalls, spoke fondly of how Thomas treated the Micronesian students in Hawai‘i like his own children: “He brought a better understanding between our people and the United Nations. He was a living example of what the United Nations stands for. . . . He has won an everlasting place in the hearts of the people of the Trust Territory” (*Memorial to Elbert Duncan Thomas*, 1956, 80–81). Just two years later, Heine became a district educational administrator and helped improve educational opportunities throughout the Trust Territory.

After Thomas’s death, Frank Midkiff and then Delmas H. Nucker served as high commissioners. Both Midkiff and Nucker emphasized education and teacher training, particularly the training of local educators. Nucker expressed these goals in an address to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, saying, “We don’t want Americans to teach Micronesians; we want them to teach Micronesians how to teach other Micronesians” (as cited in Hezel, 1995, p. 289). However, progress toward economic and political independence continued to move forward at a snail’s pace. “The United States would take a slow-paced approach to development that was to be aimed at eventual economic self-reliance while it safeguarded local interests. . . . There was no more hurry to establish a legislature than there was to pave the roads or lengthen the airstrips or do any of the hundreds of things that, while desirable, could be postponed to an indefinite day in the future” (Hezel, 1995, pp. 264, 304). While slow progress was being made toward economic and governmental autonomy, authorities from the Northern Marianas described the U.S. approach as letting “the people grow politically, economically, and educationally at their own pace” so other nations would not criticize the U.S. for coercion (Willens and Siemer, 2000, p. 104).

In 1958, American citizens were widely debating whether Hawai‘i should be admitted as a state, and the future of Pacific peoples was a major issue. Senator John F. Kennedy expressed hope that the debate over Hawai‘i’s statehood would turn attention to Micronesia and gain “a better understanding of the peoples of those areas, their needs and aspirations” (Maga, 1992, p. 17). Kennedy was, of course, deeply influenced by his own wartime experiences in the Pacific and concerned about the Soviet Union’s criticisms of the U.S. as a colonizer and as a nuclear threat to peace.



Second from right: John A. Carver is installed as Assistant Secretary of the Interior. President Kennedy is standing at left.

**Decolonization Efforts and the Congress of Micronesia in the 1960s:
Kennedy, Udall, and Carver**

After Kennedy was elected president in 1960, he pursued his interest in the long-term development of the Pacific. That same year, the United Nations created a Declaration of Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. All but three of the original trust territories had already been granted independence, and the winds of anticolonialism were blowing, sending waves of support for self-government. Kennedy supported the worldwide trend, and he entrusted the Pacific efforts to two Mormon friends and supporters: Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior from 1961 to 1969,¹ and John A. Carver Jr., Assistant Secretary/Undersecretary of the Interior from 1961 to 1966.²



Assistant Secretary of Interior John A. Carver Jr. (left) with Secretary of Interior Udall. University of Arizona Archives.

At Interior, Carver oversaw the work of the Trust Territory's high commissioner and personnel, including George R. Milner and Ruth G. Van Cleve. That governing body sometimes has been criticized for moving slowly in their efforts to preserve the islanders' way of life. A 1961 UN Visiting Mission report identified problems in the Trust Territory "in almost every area: poor transportation, failure to settle war damage claims; failure to adequately compensate for land taken for military purposes; poor living conditions; inadequate economic development; inadequate education programs; and almost nonexistent medical care" (as cited in McHenry, 1975, p. 13).

Carver immediately saw a need for people in the Pacific to govern themselves (Willens and Siemer, 2000, 14). In May 1961 he spoke at the installation of Governor William Daniel on Guam, suggesting that Guam might become the model for a self-governing Trust Territory. Carver declared:

Guam's progress from an outpost of European colonialism to the threshold of *complete self-government* to us is a symbol of our national maturity. We know that the United States has never been a colonial power, even though it has not always done the best possible job. Our performance in this area of the world—Guam and the Trust Territory, for which you serve as headquarters—now endure the scrutiny of the whole world—the free, the uncommitted and the enslaved. The Government of the United States cannot be a neutral in the drama of advancement in this area. *We will be judged according to success or failure in achieving the self-sufficiency so essential to true freedom. . . .*

*Guam is the symbol of the hopes of all of the Micronesian peoples. What we do here will signify to them what they may become as their institutions develop. While our relationships are different and must continue so under the terms of the United Nations Trusteeship arrangement, there is one area where the situation is exactly the same. That is the freedom on the part of the people to determine the course and direction of their own political future.*³

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Carver's comments aimed in part at defusing international tension about the U.S. as a quasi-colonial presence in Guam and the Trust Territory. The Soviet Union, in particular, was then placing great pressure on the U.S. to end its stewardship in the Pacific. On September 25, 1961, following bitter criticism of the U.S. as a colonizer, President Kennedy reminded a UN assembly that the U.S. had once been a colony and promised to work toward self-determination of the developing island nations. He rejected the notion that the U.S. was a colonial power and began actively passing local control into the hands of the indigenous people (Willens and Siemer, 2000, pp. 3–4). In 1962 President Kennedy recommended that citizens of Guam be allowed to elect its own officials, but that was not granted for four more years, as noted in a May 1966 memorandum from Udall to President Lyndon B. Johnson.

On March 1, 1962, Carver asked the Senate subcommittee for a larger budget to administer Guam and the Trust Territory. While making that request, he stated the “refreshing challenge” of guiding “any people who want to help themselves toward a higher standard of living and self-government.” He wanted to “foster, encourage and advance” progress, and he expressed a need for better healthcare, education, and “economic and political development” in the Trust Territory. The downside of increased U.S. spending was creation of a new welfare state. Pacific historian David Hanlon argued that “new monies went not into direct development projects, but into administrative and social services” (1998, pp. 168–69).

Publicly, President Kennedy stated intentions to end U.S. oversight in the Trust Territory, but privately he expressed concerns about Micronesia's ability to unite and self-govern. Kennedy issued the highly confidential National Security Action Memorandum 145 in April 1962, expressing a lack of confidence that the Trust Territory “could ever become a viable independent nation.” He wrote that Micronesians “must become an educated people, prepared to exercise an informed choice, which means a choice by people capable of weighing the realistic alternatives.” He believed the most realistic alternative was for the islands to “move into a new and lasting relationship to the United States within our political framework.” Thus he identified “an urgent need for the initiation of programs leading to the improvement of education” (as cited in Willens and Siemer, 2000, p. 30). Kennedy's efforts resulted in an increased budget of \$17.5 million to develop Micronesia's governmental infrastructure and educational system, overseen by a task force chaired by Carver. Trust Territory headquarters moved from Guam to Saipan.



Secretary Udall visits Trust Territory headquarters in Saipan, 1962. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai‘i–Manoa Library.

In February 1963, the task force recommended an increase in Peace Corps volunteers. That decision helped the educational system in the FSM by training teachers and has continued to the present. On May 9, 1963, Anthony V. Solomon headed an important mission to research the Trust Territory and make recommendations. One surprising discovery was that U.S. officials wanted to preserve local traditions and not teach English, but the islanders were wanted to learn English and embrace modern views. Solomon recommended a 1967 or 1968 Micronesian vote between independence and permanent affiliation with the U.S. (as cited in Willens and Siemer, 2000, pp. 42–43).

Kennedy received the report on October 9 and forwarded it to Carver. Shortly thereafter, Carver visited the Trust Territory to introduce the Solomon Report to a newly formed Council of Micronesia. In Saipan at the opening of the Council of Micronesia on November 12, 1963, Carver explained that in the American system of government chosen officials represented the whole, and he said the council members “speak and act for the Micronesia people” and could move toward a territorial legislature.

Kennedy’s assassination on November 22, 1963, disrupted the administration’s momentum, but not its priorities. Interior regrouped to lead the Trust Territory forward along the initial trajectory. Consequently, they pushed forward the plan for education. Education’s share of the federal budget for the Trust Territory increased from 10 percent in 1960 to 20 percent by the end of the decade, and the total budget multiplied several times (Hezel, 1995, p. 315).

Carver correctly anticipated that jobs in government might become the foundation of the local economy (as cited in Willens and Siemer, 2000, p. 103). He reported success in training Micronesians in political and administrative work and placing them in responsible positions, both at Trust Territory headquarters and in the six Micronesian districts.

After many studies were conducted and Carver made a detailed recommendation, Secretary Udall authorized the Council of Micronesia in 1963. It began as an educational exercise to prepare the islanders for self-government. In his remarks at the opening session of the council, Carver suggested that the people would achieve a “unity of purpose,” much as the

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Continental Congress worked out the differences between “the merchants of Boston and the planters of Virginia.”



Dwight Heine of the Marshall Islands chaired the Council of Micronesia and helped form the Congress of Micronesia. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai‘i–Manoa Library.

Dwight Heine served as chair of the Micronesian Council and helped form the Congress of Micronesia on September 28, 1964, a territorial legislature patterned after the American model (Hezel, 1995, p. 30). This was a major step toward independence. The congress could create laws, so long as they did not conflict with U.S. international treaties or executive orders.

The Trust Territory held elections in 1965 and, like a teenager finding newfound freedom, began acting independently. In 1966 Heine became the first district administrator in the Marshall Islands, and the Congress of Micronesia asked President Lyndon B. Johnson to form a commission to explore Micronesia’s future. After no response, in 1967 the congress formed a six-member Micronesian Future Political Status Commission. That commission, chaired by Lazarus Salii of Palau, traveled widely to gather opinions about Micronesia’s political future. In 1969 the commission presented its findings to U.S. negotiators, who were surprised by “the clarity of the Micronesia proposal.” The commission made many confident and articulate demands regarding drafting a constitution, settling war claims, and reclaiming undisputed control of their own lands (Hezel, 1995, p. 317). In essence, Micronesians were moving steadily toward the self-government they were seeking and the U.S. had been talking about for several decades.

Then Secretary Udall made a major misstep. The Departments of State and Defense requested a plebiscite for independence, but Udall resisted, feeling that the political options were unclear and that the people were not ready to make an informed decision. In 1971, two years after the end of his service, he viewed this as “a major blunder” (as cited in Willens and Siemer, 2000, p. 127).



Lazarus Salii addressing UN Trusteeship Council, 1967. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai‘i–Manoa Library.

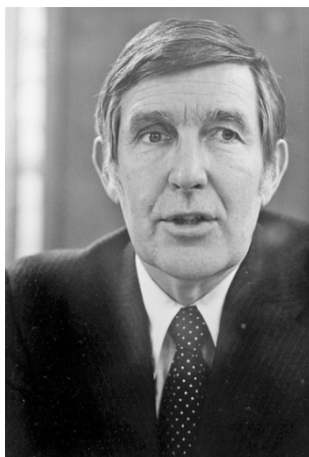
In response to the request from the Congress of Micronesia, the U.S. proposed to make Micronesia a U.S. commonwealth. Although some northern factions favored this proposal, many islanders were incensed. On August 14, 1970, Senator Salii emphatically argued, “Micronesia would become the newest, smallest, the remotest non-white minority in the United States political family—as permanent and as American, shall we say, as the American Indian” (as cited in Hezel, 1995, p. 333). Around this time, student Justina Riklon wrote a stirring essay: “People of Micronesia have been for years trying to find the best type of government for Micronesia. As for my own opinion, I would like for Micronesia to become an independent nation. Although I know that this will be hard, I’d rather be under a government that is run by a Micronesian than a foreigner” (as quoted in Brower, 1975, p. 145). These concerns would shape the dialogue regarding the political future of Micronesia.



At the Congress of Micronesia meeting in the summer of 1970, Hans Williander of Chuuk recommended independence from the United States. He later became an influential Mormon district president in the 1980s. Trust Territory Photo Archives, Pacific Collection, University of Hawai'i–Manoa Library.

Micronesia's Move for Independence: Mo Udall and Mormon Missionaries in the 1970s

When the Congress of Micronesia met in the summer of 1970, Hans Williander—a Chuukese newcomer to the congress and, later, an influential Mormon district president—proposed full independence from the United States (as cited in Hezel, 1995, p. 334). The heated debate prompted a trip to Micronesia by Morris “Mo” Udall—a one-eyed, six-foot-five former NBA player who was serving as a member of the House Interior Committee. Although not an active member of his church, Mo was deeply influenced by his Mormon roots and his experiences as an army captain on Saipan.⁴ He had been elected to the House of Representatives in 1961 after his brother Stewart became Secretary of the Interior. Mo’s travel to Micronesia in 1971 led him to sponsor preliminary legislation for a congressional commission to sort out Micronesia’s future, prompting U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to take decisive action (Willens and Siemer, 2000, p. 212).



Representative Mo Udall,
chair of the House Interior
and Insular Affairs
Committee with oversight
for the Pacific.

The debate over Micronesia's status divided into two major factions. The northern factions in Micronesia wanted a political future apart from the less-developed islands (what later became the Federated States of Micronesia). In April 1972, the Northern Marianas Islands began negotiating to become a commonwealth. These negotiations culminated in President Gerald Ford's signing the Covenant Establishing Commonwealth Status for the Northern Mariana Islands on March 24, 1976.

That year was a dynamic time to discuss freedom, particularly in light of the US bicentennial of independence from Great Britain. During that year of political debate about Micronesian independence, Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy arrived in Honolulu on July 28 to serve as an "area supervisor" for the Hawaii-Pacific Isles Area. Groberg had been a Mormon missionary and later a mission president in Tonga. He anticipated that the Trust Territory would be terminated within the next year, bringing an end to guarantees of religious freedom. Consequently, he requested a meeting with William W. Cannon, president of the Hawaii Honolulu Mission. On August 24, Groberg and Cannon reviewed Article 6 of the Trust Territory agreement. Cannon later wrote, "All of these goals are consistent with the needs of a missionary effort which demands freedom, stability, and enlightenment" (Cannon, 1997, p. 37). Groberg and Cannon wanted to send a wave of missionaries from Hawaii to Micronesia, but where to start? Cannon had previously talked about assigning missionaries throughout Micronesia but was daunted by the task. Establishing a missionary presence provided a world of challenges, including language training and securing housing, travel visas, and funding for airplane tickets. Also, where would new converts meet for church? Yet he accepted the challenge, wondering which island would be first.

That question was answered three days later, on August 27, when Elders Todd Hansen and Tim Bean brought into the mission office Ohren Ohry, a Pingelapese schoolteacher from Pohnpei who was studying at Mormon-owned Brigham Young University-Hawaii. Ohry said he would be baptized if the Church would send missionaries to Pohnpei. President Cannon agreed, and Ohry was baptized.⁵

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Left to right: Mormon supervisors and missionaries on Yap, 1978: Pacific Area legal counsel Tom Kay, mission president William W. Cannon, missionary Douglas Andrews, missionary David Kay, Pacific Area supervisor John H. Groberg. Courtesy of Mark Butler.

In quick succession, Elder Groberg and President Cannon sent missionaries to Pohnpei (October 23, 1976), to the Marshall Islands (February 3, 1977), to Chuuk (July 7, 1977), to Yap (November 14, 1977), and to Palau (July 5, 1978). Then the Micronesia Guam Mission was formed on April 1, 1980, signaling a revitalization of missionary work. Later, Mormon missionaries began teaching in Kosrae (March 26, 1985).

Sending missionaries throughout Micronesia has not been without controversy. Father Hezel has asserted that the presence of Mormon missionaries on the islands “speaks volumes about the cultural impact of the colonial years” (1995, p. 366). One might argue, however, that missionaries from other churches signal a freedom of choice from traditional colonial powers toward a more democratic dispersion of power, as indigenous people are ordained as priests to guide local congregations. Today, Mormons number around 5 percent of the Micronesian population, with most congregations being led by indigenous members. Particularly noteworthy was the appointment of local fisherman Lensper Kalio as president of the Panasang Pohnpei Stake (similar to a Catholic diocese). Today indigenous Mormons guide congregations throughout Micronesia, signs of an ecclesiastical coming of age.



Panasang Pohnpei Stake Presidency, March 16, 2014: second counselor Nixson Redes, first counselor Francisco Alwis Hadley, and President Lensper Kalio. Courtesy of Ruby Chandler.

In 1977, a year after President Ford’s signing of the covenant with the Northern Marianas, Representative Mo Udall was appointed chair of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee with oversight for the Pacific. Mo used his connections to finalize Micronesia’s legal status. US and Micronesian teams were trying to work out key principles to arrange a “compact of free association,” allowing Micronesia self-government while protecting US defense interests. The people of four former Trust Territory districts—Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap—met in a constitutional convention and voted in a referendum on July 12, 1978, to create a federation.

United Nations observers certified this referendum as a legitimate act of self-determination. Thereby, the people reasserted their inherent sovereignty which had remained dormant but intact, through the years of stewardship by the League of Nations and the United Nations.

Upon implementation of the FSM Constitution on May 19, 1979, the former districts became states of the Federation, and in due course adopted their own state constitutions. Nationwide democratic elections were held to elect officials of the national and four state governments. The Honorable Tosiwa Nakayama, the former president of the Congress of Micronesia, became the first president of the FSM and formed his Cabinet. The new Congress of the FSM convened, elected the Honorable Bethwel Henry as speaker, and began to enact laws for the new nation (Church History Department, n.d., pp. 5–6). Ironically, at the same time that the FSM was claiming self-determination, it was still very financially dependent on U.S. aid. Hanlon notes that “by 1979, total federal assistance had skyrocketed to \$138.7 million with federal programs and capital improvement project accounting for nearly 60 percent of that figure, or nearly \$70 million” (1998, p. 172).

A new Compact of Free Association was signed on October 1, 1982, and approved by FSM voters in 1986. As historian Michel Lupant noted, “The Compact of Free Association (COFA) defines the relationship that three sovereign states—the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Republic of Palau—have entered into as associated states with the United States. Under the COFA relationship, the United States

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provides guaranteed financial assistance over a 15-year period administered through the Office of Insular Affairs in exchange for full international defense authority and responsibilities” (Lupant, 2011, p. 694).

Following these years of formative changes, Representative Udall introduced H.J.Res.392 to approve the Compact of Free Association on September 19, 1986, declaring that “the people of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia are self-governing.” That compact entered into force on November 3, 1986. On January 14, 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed the compact into law. This law had tremendous impact on Micronesia’s self-determination, though the Federated States of Micronesia lack a self-sufficient economy and thus remain financially dependent on the United States. Establishment of the compact signaled a new, more self-reliant relationship between the FSM and United States. The FSM has far to go on the long journey toward economic self-sufficiency, and the “brain drain” of emigration to the U.S. remains a challenge for its long-term stability.

Conclusion

As a suitable conclusion to this story, in May 1987 the westernmost part of the United States—Guam’s Orote Point—was renamed as Point Udall to honor Representative Udall’s contributions to Micronesia. The easternmost point of U.S. territory (on St. Croix in the Virgin Islands) is also named Point Udall after his brother Stewart. While proposing the bill that led to renaming the point on Guam, U.S. Representative Denny Smith and Guam’s congressional delegate Ben Blaz wrote in H.R. 2434, “If our legislation is approved, America’s day would begin and end at a Point Udall.” It was fitting that representatives from both the mainland and from Guam thereby honored two Mormon brothers from Arizona who guided Micronesia’s journey toward self-governance.



Left: Point Udall, Guam; right: Point Udall, St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

Ultimately, administering Micronesia involved returning those islands to the original status of self-rule by the indigenous people. This transition involved many U.S. presidential administrations with various agendas for Micronesia. In the late 1940s the U.S. military began with controversial nuclear testing but also slowly rebuilt the islanders’ educational infrastructure. The 1950s witnessed the educational efforts of Elbert Thomas and others. During the 1960s, John Carver and Stewart Udall engaged with indigenous leaders in decades-long debate about self-government. Micronesians united to push for self-government, and Mo Udall’s efforts cemented today’s Compact of Free Association. That same debate dramatically pushed forward

Mormon missionary work throughout Micronesia, leading to rapid growth of the church and meaningful service of a new generation of indigenous leaders.

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Notes

¹ Udall had served two years as a Mormon missionary, then enlisted as a gunner in the U.S. Air Force. Stewart had been elected to Congress in 1954 and proved instrumental in securing Arizona's vote for Senator John F. Kennedy in the 1960 Democratic Nomination Convention. Because of this support, in 1961, President Kennedy appointed him to be the Secretary of the Interior. The University of Arizona Library, Special Collections, houses the papers of Stewart Udall (AZ 372) and other members of the Udall family.

² Joining Udall at Interior was John A. Carver Jr., a fellow Mormon born in Preston, Idaho. After earning a BA from Brigham Young University in 1939, Carver earned a law degree from Georgetown in 1947. In Boise he served as assistant attorney general until 1948. He was later appointed Assistant Secretary of the Interior in 1960, where he oversaw the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service. In 1965 he was promoted to Undersecretary of the Interior.

³ Ironically, the Trust Territory surpassed Guam in its quest for self-determination. As recently as 2012, Professor Edward Wolfers called for the decolonization of Guam. Many Chamorros report feeling like secondhand citizens.

⁴ Journalist Larry L. King praised Mo Udall as "the best public servant" he ever knew because of a combination of "rare intelligence, prodigious energy, the ability to persuade and explain, a sense of humor that eased tensions and made friends, an instinctive understanding of process, an innate sense of justice, a good heart, and uncommon courage." Larry L. King, foreword to Carson and Johnson, *Mo*, ix.

⁵ For more about Mormon influence in Pohnpei, see Jensen, 2008, 93–106; see also Martinich, 2013.