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COMMUNICATION FROM MR. HANS J. IMPOLA CONCERNING
THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS(Circulated in accordance with rule 24 of the rules
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Longview, Washington 98632

27 August 1980

The Honourable Jimmy Carter
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Former President John Kennedy once committed our country's energies into sending an American to the moon and back. Less well-known to the United States public was his pledge that our country, in its guardianship of "little islands", would launch in Micronesia a public health programme rising "at least to the minimum acceptable standards of a United States community".

The United States met that first commitment before the decade was out; but sadly, the United States has not been able to honour President Kennedy's 17-year-old pledge to the people of Micronesia. Our country's vast and great technology, will and concern for its own citizens' health, have failed President Kennedy, Micronesia's people and itself.

The recent Interagency Policy Review No. 1 for the Trust Territories has reaffirmed the Kennedy pledge in stating that health standards in Micronesia should be "no lower than in the United States". The United States promised, in the 1947 Trusteeship Agreement, 1/ to "protect the health of the inhabitants". Recently, Senator Inouye was quoted as saying that the United States stewardship in Micronesia "has been one of neglect". Surely among the basic human rights, a programme you have stressed, is the right to quality medical care.

1/ Trusteeship Agreement for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
(United Nations publication, Sales No. 1957.VI.A.1).

I recently completed my two-year commitment as a Peace Corps Volunteer on Kosrae Island in Micronesia. Near the end of my term I was given a direct and crushing example of the poverty of Micronesia's health system. While on duty as a forestry adviser, I suffered a severe cut on my hand which received stitches at the local hospital. According to the best medical advice on the island, there was no immediate need for further treatment; this advice was woefully incorrect. I am now undergoing restoration treatment, but understand I may never regain the full use of my hand. Had I initially received proper medical advice on Kosrae, following correct medical treatment, I would have retained full use of my hand.

I, personally, have been physically hurt by the inadequacies of Micronesia's health system. Thus, the issue involved here is not an abstract one, yet it goes far beyond my own personal difficulty. That is why I write to you with regard to Kosrae's and Micronesia's people, my friends and their families there who must trust their health and lives to this impoverished health system.

You and I, being proud of our country, will not be satisfied until our promises are fulfilled entirely. Thus the trusteeship should be extended to provide us the opportunity to complete our pledges to the people of Micronesia. Our honour must be retained to benefit foreign relations and instil pride in our country.

I become disheartened when I hear reports that the United States intends to abandon its trusteeship before its commitments to Micronesia, particularly on health services, have been met. I am confused, and cannot understand why our country would think of walking away without completing its pledges. This is why I write to you, and to other distinguished Americans, to learn whether what I hear is true; that my country has failed to keep a high pledge, and perhaps does not care.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Hans J. IMPOLA

cc. United Nations Trusteeship Council
Secretary of the Interior of the United States
Representative Phillip Burton
Senator Daniel Inouye
Senator Henry Jackson
Senator Edward Kennedy
High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
Department of Health and Human Services
President of the Federated States of Micronesia
Governor of Kosrae
Ronald Reagan
John Anderson
