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Peace Corps in Micronesia

I have just read Bob Krauss' report "Peace Corps Can Be A Problem" as reprinted in the April 23 issue of the Guam Territorial Sun. Some of the statements attributed to Mr. Pincetich, Peace Corps director, for the Trust Territory, invite comment.

The statement that the Peace Corps came into the Territory "at the invitation of the Congress of Micronesia and not of the U.S. Trust Territory administration" is both unfortunate and untrue.

The Peace Corps was first "invited" to the Trust Territory in the fall of 1961 early in my administration as High Commissioner. A survey was then made and plans developed. Agreement had been reached and the legal aspects of Peace Corps operation in the trusteeship area had been checked out. The program was ready to be initiated at the time we succeeded in securing authorization from Congress for a greatly increased appropriation for the Trust Territory administration.

The annual appropriation was then \$6 million. The new authorization provided a ceiling of \$17.5 million. In August 1962, within a few weeks of the enactment of the new ceiling, I received a letter from Peace Corps Director Shriver stating that in view of the prospective new level of funding that they had decided not to proceed with the project for the time being — as they had so many demands elsewhere in areas of greater need, etc.

We maintained contact and in fact had another abortive project proposal in 1954. The present program was initiated just over a year ago when we were advised by Washington that the Peace Corps was casting about for new areas and was again interested in operating in the Trust Territory.

A meeting was suggested in Honolulu, and I flew there from Saipan to meet Mr. Pritchard, Peace Corps Director for the Far East, to discuss arrangements and to work out an agreement. We were requested not to publicize the meeting — in order that the White House could make the announcement. The subject of "invitation" came up in our discussions and I then stated that it could only be at the invitation of the Trust Territory administration and that, in fact, such invitation had been an outstanding one. Mr. Pritchard suggested that, although this was so, it would be helpful if there were also a request from the Congress of Micronesia or otherwise indicating the attitude of the Micronesian people.

I assured him that they would welcome the program and pointed out that the Congress of Micronesia would not meet for three months and that it would hardly be appropriate to call a special session for the purpose. I agreed to communicate with a number of Micronesian leaders on the possibility of the program and inviting their reaction individually. This was done and the responses were uniformly favorable as I had anticipated.

Unfortunately the legend that the Peace Corps came into the Trust Territory not at the invitation of the administration, but by demand of the people, has been spread even in official press releases from Peace Corps headquarters.

Misunderstanding of the facts leads inevitably to talk of "competing American administrations." There can only be one administration and it must include the Congress of Micronesia as the legislative branch of the government. To set the Congress apart from the administration is mischievously divisive. The same is true of comments from responsible officials on program policies, administrative organization and government financing. The islands are too small for conflicting and competitive programs.

I withhold comment on other statements in the article including the arrant nonsense about the efficiency of the administration. It will bear close comparison with any other in the Pacific area.

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