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Suggestions for Improving the U. S. Image in Micronesia

As we strive toward the establishment, with the Micronesians, of a viable and enduring political relationship, the relevance and importance of the U.S. image is clear. This is not something that can be plastered and patched by a few devices or instant efforts, although some steps can and I believe should be taken which would signal to the people of Micronesia our real awareness of them and their interests and concerns, and our consequent readiness to receive them warmly into what has well been called the American political family through whatever type or types of political arrangement may eventually be negotiated.

There is no escaping the hard fact, however, - a fact well known here and often exploited by unfriendly elements, - that the U. S. has a strategic, military interest in Micronesia. We need to exert special efforts therefore to explain the reasons for this interest and Micronesia's share in it through such procedures as those going on at present with respect to negotiations for land needs on Tinian. These include the exercise of the kind of manner and substance that show warm human interest in Micronesia and its people and a real knowledge of their backgrounds, needs, desires, and concerns. To a large extent Micronesians are hostages of history - not only to the series of foreign rule they have known, but also to their own, widely-varying historic traditions and traditional patterns of leadership which are now in confrontation with the late 20th century and its demands. These demands which are an important factor in determination of political status pose what must be an enormous challenge to traditional concepts.

For our continuing status negotiations a climate of mutual good faith is essential. Suspicion of U.S. aims and interests sparked by unfriendly elements and fed by emotion and lack of information, would poison the atmosphere and must be met by clarity of purpose and patient handling on our part. When we wish to use firmness, we must be sure it is required. We should not and do not need to yield a shred of integrity of purpose, but techniques and procedures should remain flexible. It's a fine point, but perhaps it will be helpful in our negotiations to bear in mind that we do not oppose Micronesians as such (Ambassador Williams has stated that we are not engaged in adversary proceedings), but may and do often oppose Micronesian views or proposals. There is no substitute for substance and in the final analysis it is the components of the American presence itself in Micronesia which are the significant, if not the determining, factors in the Micronesians' view of us. These components may be handily, but by no means lightly, described as the three P's: Programs, People, and Performance.

The point is so obvious that it need not be labored, that the nature of these components, as demonstrated in Micronesia simply is America to the Micronesian. Hence the importance of the programs established, the people selected to administer them, and the joint performance of these two elements. The blend should be such as to demonstrate, in practical terms graspable by all, our awareness, interest, intelligence, and perseverance on behalf of the people for whom we have the considerable responsibility of being administering authority. We are neither Uncle Sugar nor Simon Legree, but somewhere in between, in a line of action which Solomon himself would often find difficult to identify, is our course. In order to have the respect of the Micronesians we must continue

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efforts to supply genuine needs as required without overdoing the support and creating unwittingly a mendicant mentality that can only prove enervating to the people we would aid and would cost us their respect.

On Micronesian islands, as everywhere else, the American whom the Micronesian knows is America. We are a diverse nation and the diversity of our representation here is perhaps typical. A question that might well be considered, however, is whether or not there is adequate briefing in the U. S. of new American employees, and their families, before they come to Micronesia. This reference is of course not to the technical expertise for which they were engaged, but rather to the need, long acknowledged in the Foreign Service, of sound preparation for meeting the problems and requirements of living in a different culture and environment. I suggest that new stateside employees be given briefings and/or information material, not alone on facts and figures of the TT, but also on the above-mentioned general problem of orientation. Specifically, I suggest that arrangements be explored for making available to wives the State Department Foreign Service Institute Overseas Assignment Course. If a Washington-based course is impractical for some, materials and references from the course might be provided with a view to alerting families to some of the problems of overseas living and helping them cope. The aim and result would be easier US/Micronesian relations within Micronesia, better lines of communication, perhaps even some neighborliness which is hard to spot now, and results could so spread beneficially among other Americans who have been here for years.

(I recognize that Capitol Hill, Saipan, is a poor vantage point from which to make an observation on neighborliness. The irony of history that has housed the TT Administration - a symbol to Micronesians of the U.S. - and the American officers of that Administration in the relatively isolated fortress complex which formerly housed the CIA, - this irony has aggravated the difficulties of casual, friendly - communication with Micronesians. To a limited extent this is being eased by the increasing Micronesianization of the Administration and the consequent addition of Micronesians to this community. But this very development, on the other hand, has had the unfortunate effect of widening the gap between Micronesians at responsible level in the Administration and those in other positions, including most significantly, members of the Congress. In fact the gap between the legislative and executive branches of the TT Government, especially in its effect on relations among Micronesians therein, is such as to evoke deep concern, if not alarm, in its implication of suspicion of the aims of the U.S. as the administering authority.)

In external matters too, the U.S. performance with respect to the representation of Micronesia's legitimate interests is watched, particularly in connection with consideration of future political status. Since we are working toward arrangements that will provide for continuing U. S. responsibility in the fields of external affairs and defense, our performance, especially in the former, is a measure of what Micronesians might reasonably expect at the conclusion of trusteeship. It is particularly important that where possible and appropriate we be alert to Micronesian interests and acknowledge them, championing them as possible, and, as with the Law of the Sea matters which are of very great

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concern to these islands, exploring the subject jointly with them. An example of excellent support of Micronesian (and U. S.) interest was our recent sponsoring of ECAFE associate membership for Micronesia.

The assistance of our Embassies to Micronesian missions traveling abroad is a valuable part of the American image. This can be made even more fruitful by the establishment here in Saipan of better procedures for notification of our missions of such travel. An outstanding example of such assistance has been that provided on numerous occasions by the Regional Fisheries Attache at Embassy Tokyo.

As noted earlier, there are some more superficial, but very helpful, steps that could be taken to improve our image in Micronesia. Especially to be recommended are visits from outstanding Americans. We have had entire State Department-supported programs for such purposes functioning for the past 20 years or so with respect to other countries, but little seems to have been done for our own Trust responsibility. Logistics for such visits are less formidable than they may once have been and the prospective rewards on both sides are enticing.

The recent visit to Saipan and Majuro of the Apollo XVII astronauts, a glorious exception to what seems to have been the general neglect of Micronesia, was a resounding success. The three men personally established instant rapport with the Micronesians and their warmth and appreciation endeared them to the people, probably even more than their magnificent space achievement. They were seen as fine Americans, splendid and delightful human beings, - a role more important here than that of heroic astronauts. People on Saipan seemed amazed, as well as delighted, that Micronesia had been included on the itinerary.

Americans of achievement in other categories, if less dramatic, are or would be welcome and appreciated. These might be in such fields as:

Music - COMNAVARIANAS band is always a hit. Music and rhythm are an important part of Micronesian life and both popular and classic groups would be welcomed. (The Honolulu Symphony is to come soon, I understand). Artists should be fully warned concerning climate, lack of usual halls and facilities and other aspects of the local scene, but if they feel a bit adventurous and want to share their talent in a rare experience, this is it.

Sports - Micronesians love games and competition. Baseball is very popular with flourishing Little Leagues. Other sports including water sports - in exhibition or competition would be very successful.

Lectures - During the school year, there would be good opportunity for able speakers who would be available to talk to English-comprehending groups in high school and training schools and certainly including government employees - a large and influential sector of the population. Micronesians very much need to see Micronesia in perspective, and the type of lecturer in politics, history, foreign affairs who would be competent and not condescending but who would avoid the strictly academic and erudite, could be immensely useful in

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helping to broaden the vision. Intellectual life is, I think, unnecessarily frugal in the TT, and an incentive to thought beyond the bounds of the problems and gossip of a small island would be a great general uplift.

Programs, people, performance - these blended, are the key to a necessary and urgent effort to improve the Micronesians' views of America as a country and people with whom they can look forward to being associated, not just out of economic necessity on their part and strategic requirements on ours, but out of genuine and broader mutual interests.

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