

EDITORIALS

Friends Of Micronesia.....

We're not exactly sure how to come to grips with a new organization, Friends of Micronesia, which has just announced a nationwide organization. While some of their aims and goals seem completely plausible, and worthwhile, we'll have to reserve our judgement until we see names of the leaders involved, and a full explanation of exactly what it is they are up to.

A news release on the organization came to our office the other day, out of the West Coast office, Friends of Micronesia, Berkeley, Calif. They also have an East Coast Office in Boston, Mass. They are seeking contributions to help sustain their "services."

The release states that the "Friends of Micronesia" is a nationwide organization of Americans concerned with guaranteeing self-determination for the Micronesia people. It announces the opening of the two offices on opposite coasts, and claims they are instituting a large scale information program, including multi-media programs, including a prime-time television show in Boston.

A number of additional programs are planned at schools, colleges and civic organizations across the United States. Lapel buttons and bumper stickers have been distributed to over a thousand Americans who have lived in Micronesia. A bi-monthly newsletter will provide news-briefs and analyses as well as information on regional activities.

The key to the release is a statement of policy. "Friends of Micronesia is working to guarantee Micronesians a free choice in determining their future and is pledged to support whatever political status is chosen by the Micronesia people. Friends of Micronesia believes that no decisions should be made about political future until Micronesians are enabled to act independently with their wishes taking precedence over the economic and military interests of the United States."

They also report that a letter writing campaign is about to begin and a lobbyist is already at work in Washington to see to it that Micronesian interests take precedence over American designs for Micronesia. They also note that an additional new service has been organized by volunteers on the West Coast to aid Micronesian students now in the United States or planning to attend American schools. The West Coast office provides help in such things as choosing schools, finding accommodations and in counseling students with academic problems.

On the surface, at least, we can't find much fault with the organization. Certainly their goal of providing information about Micronesia to the American public is laudable, particularly in view of the fact that few Americans really know anything at all about the islands of the Pacific. Unfortunately, "information" is a very nebulous thing. What information? What slant will it take? Who is to provide that information to be disseminated to the American people? Will it be propoganda, half-truths, or will it be the straight story?

We believe that, we here on Guam, and this newspaper want to be "Friends of Micronesia" too. We certainly want them to make their own decision as far as political future, and the United States has already promised them that final decision. Yet, it is all pretty obvious that everything related to political status is a very complex matter, and doubtfully can be explained to the citizens of the United States by a few bumper stickers and a letter or two.

When the Friends say that they believe no decisions should be made about political future until Micronesians are enabled to act independently with their wishes taking precedence over the economic and military interests of the United States, we say that is just a bit of gobbledegook. The brutal fact is that the United States itself is split on this. We are damned if we do, and damned if we don't.

If they proceed to help the islands with economic development, say fishing, tourism, or agriculture, some radical Micronesians will accuse the United States of economic exploitation—because it will, by necessity, be American firms doing the developing. Air Micronesia, for example, or Continental/Travelodge hotels, or Ken Jones with his Tinian agriculture.

If we don't help the islanders develop their economy we criticized on all sides for keeping the "zoo" theory, for keeping natives in a coconut economy, keeping them on a subsistence

If we do pour money into the economy (\$60 million this year) build roads, hospitals, airports, and housing for the people we've accused by the radicals of Americanization. Once the islands used to a \$60 million a year economy, how can it ever go back to a copra, and coconuts that independence would bring, the radicals argue.

Yet, if we don't build the roads, the hospitals, and the housing we'll be under severe criticism from all sides because of our lack of interest in improving the standards of the islanders.

If we do build military bases on the islands—which we have a right under the United Nations to do—we'll be criticized from all sides. If we don't build the military bases there will be plenty of Americans who will scream about World War II, and we fought for the islands only to give them away, as we did Okinawa, and the Bonins. There'll be plenty of political soothsayers with benefit of hindsight, who will insist that we brought the concept of independence to the islanders ourselves, with the establishment of the idea of "unity" through the setting up of the Congress of Micronesia. If we would have ran the islands under

separate districts, as the Japanese did, there would have no thought of unity, or independence because the islanders do, after all, have separate languages and culture. And if we wouldn't have brought the Peace Corps in, with their wild idealism, and if we wouldn't have provided so many young leaders with an education in the States there would have been little talk of unity, or independence.

Be that as it may now, we're committed, we believe the Micronesians should choose for themselves their political future—the sooner the better. We are also skeptical of an organization called "The Friends of Micronesia" until we know who their leaders are and more about their objectives. Because Micronesia is, indeed, a complex question and will require real understanding not bumper stickers.