

Editorials

An Impossible Task.....

Welcome to Guam Mr. Carpenter:

Mr. Stanley S. Carpenter is the new deputy assistant Secretary of Interior for Territorial Affairs. He is on Guam for a brief stay before visiting the Trust Territory, and then American Samoa on a familiarization tour.

Mr. Carpenter is more qualified than most for his new duties. He has many years of experience in foreign service, including several years as civil administrator of the Ryukyu Islands in 1967-69.

Mr. Carpenter will find plenty of problems where ever he travels throughout the Western Pacific. Even Guam, with its rapidly expanding economic base has plenty of difficulties of its own. Certainly, we could use the assistance of the Department of Interior in our quest for land on which to build our new power plant. Certainly, the Department of Interior would be instrumental in assisting development of the proposed Seashore Park, and National Historical Park.

But Guam's problems, in reality, pale when compared with the massive decisions that have to be faced up to in our neighboring islands of Micronesia. Even Mr. Carpenter is aware of that. In a UPI story, datelined Washington, Carpenter was quoted as saying that Samoa has similar problems of underdevelopment and cultural conflict which plague Micronesia, but he noted that Samoa is smaller and more homogeneous, so it should be less difficult to deal with.

"I think," he said, "the biggest problem (for Micronesia) is on the economic side," explaining that it needs faster development of economy through improvement of its infrastructure.

"The reason why," he went on, "development has been so slow in the past is because there is a great deal of distance between the island groups," noting a lack of transportation and communications between the islands. Carpenter pointed out that only in the past several years has the budget been high enough to allow Micronesia to move ahead economically. Other problems Carpenter foresees is education, health services, and recruitment of well qualified people from the mainland to implement programs on the islands.

Mr. Carpenter will soon find out though that the main problem facing us in Micronesia is not economic. Nor is it health, or education, or in hiring outsiders to implement island programs. This

is unfortunate, because those problems could be solved.

No, the main problem in Micronesia right now is political.

It is that simple. Education, health, economic development are all going to get minor treatment until the question of political status is resolved. Talk to any of the Micronesians, and we think you'll get the same answer. It is the only thing on the minds of most of them. The feeling is deep, and generally not exactly pro-American. We think that Mr. Carpenter might be in for some surprises when he talks Koror, hoping to discuss such things as bringing out more qualified Americans to implement island programs.

Instead, we're afraid, he'll run into young revolutionaries like Hans Wiliander of Truk, who recently called on the Congress of Micronesia not to compromise in its negotiations with the United States. He advocated independence "as a real alternative which Micronesians have the right to choose and should consider." Speaking in the House of Representatives, Wiliander said, "I am advocating a state in which Micronesians would possess without question, full legal control over their land; full political power to set its laws without outside hindrance and influence; and full legal authority over its own affairs, both internally and externally." He went on to say: "The people of Micronesia have as much right to choose independence as did the people of the other territories, none of whom, so far, have chosen any status other than independence." Wiliander is co-chairman of the independence coalition which has one-third of the Congress as members.

Even discussion of economic development isn't going to entice or excite men like Wiliander, who see in economic development a dark plot to tie them in even closer with the United States. Under present laws economic development has to come from the United States because of the favored nations clause in the United Nation's charter.

Wiliander and his friends have some good points. The United States did ignore the islanders for far too long, treating them as some sort of 18th century colony. Worse, we even moved some of their home islands, and splattered atomic bombs on them. Now, our many mistakes have come back to haunt us in Micronesia. We doubt whether Mr. Carpenter is in time to undo all of the damage in our relationship with the Micronesia. We wish him well, but we just don't envy his impossible task.