

the Micronesia test

Looking back, we've published an increasing number of stories, analyses and editorials on Micronesia over the past year. Currently, there is a series by Advertiser writer James F. Cunningham who recently returned from a tour of the Trust Territory and Guam.

We hope to print more about this vast central Pacific area in 1972, for next year looms as one of decision on Micronesia's future political status and its relations with the U.S.

IN SOME WAYS, the picture looks good: The fourth round of formal future status talks has been put off until March, but in the meantime there will be contacts and exchanges aimed at narrowing differences.

The goal of both sides at this point is some form of "free association", a status that would give Micronesians internal self-government of the islands while the U.S. handles foreign affairs and defense.

That is what the Congress of Micronesia asked for. But the vital question remains about how much sovereignty the Micronesians will have.

IN OUR VIEW, the U.S. deserves credit for modifying past positions in the last round of talks at Hana, Maui in October. In addition, American security considerations are a factor in some uncertain degree.

But the Micronesians have a demand that should be met: They want to be a free nation that enters a working arrangement with the U.S. --not some kind of euphemistically-named American territory. That in-

volves a basic right.

In this equation is the fact that the people of one of the Trust Territory's six districts, the Marianas, want a form of U.S. territorial status and appear certain to go a separate way from the rest. There is also a small group pushing now for the Congress of Micronesia's second-choice option --independence.

MICRONESIA will hardly be a major U.S. election issue or embarrassment in 1972 (unless it somehow blows up, something not expected). But it could offer President Nixon another opportunity to look good.

Although it lags far behind other world issues, the Micronesia question is not only getting more attention in Hawaii but elsewhere in the nation and world.

We note, for example, a three-part series in Australia's Sydney Morning Herald which was followed by an editorial at the time of the Hana talks: It concluded:

"David and Goliath are now locked in conflict and there will have to be concessions. But they will have to come largely from Goliath. David has rights which cannot be ignored in the world of the 1970s."

THE AMERICAN self-view is probably kinder; our faults in Micronesia have not been nearness so much as economic neglect, narrow self-interest and unimaginative thinking about future Pacific Island politics.

The past year has shown some improvements in American attitudes about Micronesia. But 1972 will be the real test.

28 DEC 1971
ADVERTISER