

Editorial

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# Island Cooperation?.....

The seeds of cooperation between Guam and her neighboring islands has always been a sometime thing.

Despite the fact that we live in the same part of the world, and there are many similarities between cultures and island life style, and despite the fact that we are both more or less technically a part of the United States, we on Guam have felt ignored by the people of Micronesia—and apparently they hold the same feelings.

Guam tried to change this by starting the Pacific Conference of Legislators, but after the disaster last year in Hawaii with the funding, this scheme may have fallen flat on it's face. Guam's leaders have also had a feeling of rejection because they have long felt that they should be included, even as an observer, in the Political Status Talks, because quite obviously whatever status change the islanders get is going to definitely affect Guam as well.

There has been talk about a regional Common Market plan, but nothing definite has materialized. Conversations, either formal or otherwise, between the two administrations have been limited. That same holds true with the legislatures of the two territories.

Still, there is hopeful evidence that an end to the aloofness may be in sight. The realization that we are both situated in the same part of the Pacific, and have similar problems and assets is becoming more pronounced.

One promising sign of this was in a recent speech, made on Guam, by Speaker of the House of Representatives, Bethwel Henry, of the Congress of Micronesia. He purposely talked about the mutual interests between Guam and the other islands in the hope that his thoughts would result in increased work and understanding between our two areas. "After all," he said, "we live in the same ocean and, as we all know, in a world that is getting so much smaller. The great ocean swells which touch upon Guam's shores, also roll upon the reefs and beaches of Micronesia. There are more similarities than differences between our people, our climate, our resources, and our goals.

Henry, an articulate spokesman for the Congress said: "In view of continuing technological advances, and the pressures of modern international politics and economics, it is incumbent upon us to consider our own particular circumstances as island nations in a broader and less provincial light." He insisted that it is becoming increasingly clear that regional cooperation is taking on greater and greater importance.

The Speaker cited some reasons for "joining hands for our future benefit", touching on some of the areas in which closer cooperation between the people in Guam and the people in the Trust Territory might prove mutually beneficial. They include:

- 1. The mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and information.
- 2. The tourist industry in this part of the Pacific, which is being used by the T.T. as a destination in the future, will be to Guam's advantage, he said.
- 3. The field of education, where Henry believes Guam and the T.T. could study the advantages of mutually-funded and coordinated programs, especially in teacher-training, and nursing.

3. Economic development. Henry said that Guam and the T.T. have common interests and needs. He suggested joint exploration and exploitation in the area of marine resources as an example.

4. Agriculture. Henry pointed out that on Guam there is a known demand for fruits and vegetables, and yet in the T.T. they have vast quantities of land that is now sitting idle. He suggests better systems of marketing, and closer ties with Guam on agricultural products.

5. Land development: He said that there is more and more interest in the development of land in Micronesia, and says that Guam and the T.T. should get together to study ways and means by which laws and regulations governing the use of land might be made to conform to permit the kind of development best for both. "Considering that Guam is historically and geologically a part of Micronesia, increased investment by individuals and companies on Guam would certainly seem natural and right and be preferred over that by other interests far from our shores."

6. Banking: Speaker Henry says that Micronesians look with interest on the development of the Bank of Guam, and hope to develop a similar bank system in Micronesia, with perhaps some kind of working relationship between the two.

7. Alien Labor: Henry says that it is ironical that Guam has to import foreign labor, when on the neighboring islands there is a great amount of unemployment and underemployment. He suggests a program to train and use a skilled Micronesian work force on Guam.

8. Pollution and environmental preservation is, Henry says, another area that "we both share equal concern."

9. Political Status: He says: "While at present we may differ in the ultimate shape and direction, there is certainly a desire for all of us to work diligently towards some sort of final resolution of our respective political status so that we can bring about not only stability but also protection, development and self-satisfaction of our people."

Speaker Henry's remarks were well received by the people of Guam. It's about time somebody spoke out on the obvious need for a closer relationship between the two territories. For far too long we've managed to avoid and ignore each other. We hope that Henry's intelligent summation of the situation is a first step towards a brotherhood of the islands in the future. JCM.