

Copies to: Amb. Williams  
OSN - Mr. Wilson  
Capt. Crowe  
EA/RA - Mr. Dorrance  
IO/UNP - Mr. Sylvester  
USUN - Mr. Immerman

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General Critique

After six rounds of political status negotiations and the recently concluded Fifth Congress of Micronesia, 1973, it is safe to say that the complexity of the Micronesian political dilemma has been intensified as the forces of separation continue to haunt the members of the Congress of Micronesia. Victory and success in the current negotiations are only the beginning of the real effort here at home. Whatever Compact of Free Association is agreed upon, it must win the enthusiastic support of the Congress of Micronesia and finally the people of Micronesia. The real cause of this political dilemma is mainly internal and to a small degree, external.

In 1970, this writer wrote an article for the PACIFIC ISLANDS MONTHLY, and made the observation that "Congress was confused about what it wants." Now, two years later, and after the Fifth Congress of Micronesia, has again made its imprint on Micronesia, there seems to be no real reason to change from that observation.

As the moment of truth comes nearer regarding the final political settlement of Micronesia, the greater the forces of disagreement and fragmentation within Micronesia. To reach an accord with the U.S. delegation on the future of Micronesia is one thing, to get approval from the Congress and the people of Micronesia is another.

The refusal of the Fifth Congress to give final approval of the three measures sponsored by the Joint Committee on Future Status, namely, the bills on Constitutional Convention, the Office of Transition, and the Commission on National Unity, has set back the final resolution of the status issue to where it was two years ago. In fact, it has weakened the position of the Joint Committee on Future Status in the eyes of the U.S. delegation, and the people of Micronesia. The U.S. cannot help but wonder

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who and what does the Joint Committee on Future Status represent. This is not the fault of the Joint Committee. It is a failure of the Congress to provide leadership and guidance. It was a show of misunderstanding, and perhaps the result of political power plays by individual members within the Congress to show who really has control, power and influence. This, perhaps, is to be expected in a legislative body whose members come from varied ethnic background and various shades of political backgrounds. It is sad when national goal is sacrificed at the expense of local politics. There are ten Senators and two Representatives on the Committee. However, membership on the Committee is made by each district delegation. Greatest good for the greatest number should be the order of the day in Micronesia in this century.

The Fifth Congress for all practical purposes failed to consider the most important issue before it--the resolution of the political status of Micronesia. The Congress had decided in 1969 that the time had come to start decolonization of Micronesia. In order to do this, a Joint Committee on Future Status was created with members from both Houses and representatives from each district delegation. The mandates given this Joint Committee through several bills and resolutions are straightforward and unequivocal. These sets of instructions are the four basic principles and legal rights stated in earlier chapters. Above all, the most important mandate is to reach accord with the U.S. delegation regarding the Compact of Free Association, and secondly, to start negotiating for independence as a second option if and when Free Association proves unacceptable to the United States.

This has been the position of the Joint Committee on Future Status all along. However, in order to accomplish this end it was necessary that Micronesia start getting all the necessary instruments of transition to self-government. This would call for a constitutional convention, set the objectives of self-government by starting transitional movement. The Commission on National Unity is a by-product

of these two major movements. The question of national unity has always been a major factor as Micronesia starts on the road to self-government. Thus, it was absolutely essential that if Micronesia is to start drafting its written constitution, and start the machinery of transition from a Trusteeship government to a Micronesian self-government, the problems which are the sources of disunity and dissatisfaction among Micronesians, must also be taken into serious consideration. The Commission on National Unity would have looked into all possible sources of disunity and attempted to provide solution for them.

The causes of Micronesia's political dilemma must be looked at in the context of what the Congress of Micronesia has done regarding the work and mission of the Joint Committee on Future Status. Nothing in this Committee is parochial and regional. Its mission is national in outlook and character. As a basis of comparison, the Fifth Congress decided to pass insignificant pieces of legislation, and a great number of patch barrel legislations. While the Joint Committee was looking at the forest, the parent body, the Congress, was looking at the tree. While the Joint Committee was national in character, the whole Congress was regionalistic in character.

The President of the State, Senator Tosiwo Nakayama, asked his fellow senators and fellow Micronesians to "wake up" from their twenty-six years of sleeping. Apparently, no one wants to wake up. The Chairman of the Joint Committee on Future Status, Senator Lazarus Sali, in a speech on the floor of the Senate with members of the 1973 U.N. Visiting Mission sitting in the public gallery, implored his fellow senators by saying "Micronesians should be masters of their own destiny, and be first-class citizens in their own islands under their own constitution". He closed his remarks by commenting on the importance of a constitution, "I believe it is time that the people of our territory join hands and try to fashion a constitution--a constitution which I hope will establish for the first time a truly legal framework

for these islands. In our quest for a constitutional form of government, we must not also forget a constitution cannot do its work unless the people are united behind it. To provide unity for the people of Micronesia, we must lay the foundation for social justice in Micronesia.

The lawmakers decided that there was not enough money to start building the foundation of their future government. It is interesting to note here that in 1972 at the Special Session in Ponape, the same bill on constitution was first introduced yet it failed passage for the same reason that there was supposedly not sufficient funds. Strangely, in that same session the lawmakers voted themselves an increased in salary from \$8000 to \$12000, a \$4000 increase which represents \$132,000 a year. Again, during the January session, 1973, the same bill was brought up for action and again there was not enough funds, but again the lawmakers raised their own office expense from \$2500 to \$3500, a \$1000 increase (or \$33,000 a year). One begins to wonder if Micronesia is not gradually developing a very elitist and self-serving system of government.

Each member of the Congress of Micronesia wants to set what he thinks is the set of priorities for Micronesia. One thing should be understood and clear to all --the only real priority for Micronesia for the next five years is the political status issue and unless <sup>this</sup> issue is resolved, all other matters in Micronesia are all secondary in nature.

The major causes of the Micronesian political dilemma are many. However, it is the position of this writer that Micronesia's dilemma and its inability to come to a consensus of opinion regarding its future political status can be traced to six major areas: 1) the confrontation of the Old and the New; 2) the nature of U.S. Policy and the status of Micronesia; 3) the argument over which comes first, economic or political development; 4) unity versus fragmentation; 5) the curse of geography, and 6) arrogance of power.

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## THE OLD AND THE NEW

Micronesia as a whole refused to accept change or to embrace what is new. It is in the nature of human beings to fear what is unfamiliar, and strange. The great majority of Micronesian people would rather not bother with the world. They would rather stay home and go fishing. It is this general attitude that is causing delay in our national development. The young generation is used to a modernized way of life yet ideally it wants to say "Yankee go home". It is a paradox. A generation of Micronesians who cannot with the past live on a coconut economy, but want to advocate it because it is ideally suited for what has been learned in the classroom of the Western world, namely, that the outsiders are corrupting and colonizing the Micronesians. The affairs of the young generation which operates in the present, is the new Micronesia, the Micronesia that depends on imported goods.

The old folks are set in their own ways, they are beyond reach by any means, yet the old folks are fascinated by the new or what has been brought to Micronesia. The old leaves it up to elected leaders; the new wants more control and leaders responsive to electorate. Only the rational man in Micronesia can guide Micronesia. As a thinking man, his way would be to take Micronesia through a middle course. His sense of reality makes him reject complete independence or complete Americanization. He wants Free Association as being the closest to a synthesis of the two.

## U. S. POLICY AND MICRONESIA'S INTERNATIONAL STATUS

Micronesia is neither a U.S. territory nor is it a sovereign independent state. The Micronesian claims ownership and sovereignty on Micronesia. The American claims Micronesia by the right of conquest, but that claim ceases to exist when the United States entered into a Trust Agreement with the United Nations to govern this area. Thus, all U.S. policies toward Micronesia are affected by this strange situation.

If the United States fails to promote development of the well-being of the people of Micronesia, it is charged by Micronesians with neglect and irresponsibility.

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On the other hand, if programs and development are promoted, the United States is accused of making Micronesia more dependent on American aid. This is a real dilemma which the Congress seems to ignore by failing to enact legislation designed to resolve such a dilemma.

#### ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT?

There are those who say that Micronesia must stop all its political activities and start concentrating on the economic development of Micronesia for the next five or ten years. This view is interesting as it is naive. Were the real economic and political circumstances in Micronesia not what they are, this view might have had validity.

One of the most important aspects regarding the current negotiations is timing. Time is on their side, not ours. The longer Micronesia waits to settle its political problems, the greater the impact of American aid to Micronesia will be. Under such circumstances, Micronesia will have no choice but to choose integration with a far more superior economic system. Similarly, if, as seems to be the current trend, aid is reduced, then development will be hurt.

The sooner the Compact of Free Association is approved and ratified, the sooner the process of economic development can be instituted and controlled by Micronesians. If, on the other hand, we stop negotiation on the future status, and allow American aid, or whatever outside economic assistance to enter Micronesia, then Micronesia will become a political power easily maneuvered by the forces of international powers.

The accepted view of economic development for Micronesia is massive inflow of outside capitals to help develop the economy. This is an orthodox view, and it is not reliable. At least, it has not shown any improvement in Micronesia during the past twenty some years except making Micronesia more and more dependent on the big

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developing countries.

The Van Camp operation in Palau has not helped develop the economy of Palau more than any other districts in the area of fishing. Yet, Van Camp represents huge outside capital funds. What it has probably done to Palau is to drain its offshore resources and take them to American Samoa where American Samoans are employed and earn wages from fish caught in the Palauan waters. These can only return to Palau in small tuna cans and sold for a fantastic price. How does outside capital funds help Palau?

This writer leans toward the view of economic development which states that underdevelopment in an economy is not an original state. The roots of economy and social structure of underdevelopment are located in the colonizing countries in their cultivation of colonial dependency of their colonies. The reason for this lies principally in the character of the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized.

The Micronesian economies may become oriented to the export of certain primary products (such as fish), which would be under the control of foreign capital or companies, and constituted as markets for imported goods (canned tuna fish). Again, outside capital would develop transportation and dock facilities and utilities only to complement the export sector which is under the control of outside capital. This dependent relation also shaped the social structure of underdevelopment. This situation can happen in Micronesia if Micronesia continues to court rich outside corporations. The only way Micronesia can develop economically is by starting with small firms and corporations built mainly by Micronesian investments. Underdevelopment in Micronesia is imposed from outside. What is important is not the amount, but the direction and approach, one that must be Micronesian in orientation.

#### UNITY VS. FRAGMENTATION

Of all the problems facing Micronesia, the question of unity is the greatest.

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It is another of the many dilemmas that Micronesia must resolve before the Trusteeship Agreement is terminated.

Many people in Micronesia take for granted that Micronesia is united. On the surface, it may seem that way, but further down in the pyramid of Micronesian history and culture, it is not. There are deep resentment and feeling of antagonism among the six major ethnic groups of Micronesia. The pride of one district comes first, and when any district tries to dominate another, it is almost always unacceptable by the other districts. There is very little national pride in Micronesia, and it exists mainly among the younger generation who went to school together first in Micronesia and then later in schools outside of Micronesia.

For selfish reasons, there are those in Micronesia who would want to fragmentize Micronesia. If this should happen the Micronesia which we had come to know will cease to exist. There are those in one district who want to have a close affiliation with Japan, as there are those in another district who wants to join with an independent Republic of Nauru or join with Hawaii as an additional county of Maui. This is preposterous. The President of Nauru would be out of his mind to join with the Marshalls in such a union. He will be voted out of office by the more populated Marshall Islands. As for joining Hawaii, I would rather have a "President" in the Marshalls than a mayor. For Palau to entertain the idea of affiliation with Japan is extremely dangerous not only to herself, but for the rest of Micronesia.

These ideas of fragmentizing Micronesia exist for selfish motive. However, the Micronesian, as a race, has a good chance of developing a small Pacific nation if they can only recognize the meaning and the benefits of unification.

#### CURSE OF GEOGRAPHY

Micronesia is cursed by her very own existence while at the same time blessed by her strategic location. This dilemma has been with these islands for many centuries. Its sense of unity is diverted by her own geography as the body of

ocean which seems to disunite Micronesia is the same body of ocean which these islanders have been using as their main highway to discover one another.

The task of trying to unify Micronesia is not only difficult from the cultural point of view, but also from a natural point of view. This dilemma which nature has imposed on these islands is less a problem than the cultural one. Science and technology are gradually bringing Micronesia together and making it smaller and smaller. On the other hand entrenched ignorance and arrogance are not that easy to conquer.

#### ARROGANCE OF POWER

Since the end of World War II until now, Micronesia had experienced nothing but an easy life--a hand-out type of existence. Everything Micronesia wants, Micronesia gets. The Navy gave Micronesia a lot in terms of material goods, and while the Interior Department is no match to what the Navy gave Micronesia, the Department of Interior has given virtually every educated Micronesian a free education. A gift that Micronesians have not been asked to pay back except to return it in terms of public service to their own people. In addition, millions of dollars have been given to Micronesia every year since 1945, making Micronesia and Micronesians beneficiaries of a false economy, but nevertheless, an economy in which people do not have to worry about their future.

The Micronesian economists, bankers, government officials--all have not had to worry about the state of the Micronesian economy. There is no reason to worry, each year the U.S. Treasury Department hands out a check for Micronesia.

For over twenty years, every Micronesians has been living in a welfare state. The Micronesians have been conditioned to believe that what they have or what is given them, they rightly deserve. Very few in Micronesia has ever really earned a decent living, everything is given. The Congress of Micronesia, through its Joint Committee on Program and Budget Planning has been given a peculiar role to

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look over the Federal budget given to Micronesia each year. A role which has given it a false sense of pride by having to rework the Federal budget throughout Micronesia. In other words, the only thing the Joint Committee on Budget and Program Planning can do is to set priorities within Micronesia. It cannot basically change, increase or decrease the budget. It may alter it, but in very small ways indeed.

In other words, Micronesia is a puppet to the overall U.S. budgetary considerations. It simply hangs on and therefore makes the very life of Micronesia subject to the ups and downs of Washington thinking.

When the Congress of Micronesia in 1968 took upon itself the task of starting to decolonize Micronesia, it brought upon itself a very honorable and challenging task. In fact, it was a decision to confront its own master and creator.

At the beginning of the awesome task, the people and their Congress were united in their efforts. Micronesians gradually began to gain their confidence after all they were challenging a giant. However, something went wrong. The Congress' own Joint Committee on Future Status whose ultimate task is to recommend to Congress and the people of Micronesia appropriate course of action regarding the status issue, found it extremely difficult to move ahead. It seems that each and every lawmaker want to have his say so, and his own impact on the course of Micronesia's political future. It is a case of Micronesian stubbornness, ignorance and arrogance against another Micronesian. No sense of purpose is served at all.

No more vivid example of thoughtless and stupid arrogance can be conceived than the attitude which occurred within the Joint Committee on Future Status. When following the rules of standing committees of the Congress, what is agreed upon by the majority shall become the official position of the whole committee unless a dissenting view is offered. In the Joint Committee on Future Status, it was understood that, as a gentlemen's agreement, everyone in the Committee would support the majority opinion in negotiating, and in the Congress. This, however, has not been honored. Instead, shrewd politicking behind the scene has been the rule.

Someone once said: "There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action."

In the final analysis, the root cause of the difficulties and the dilemma of Micronesia's political future exist not alone in the work of the Joint Committee on Future Status and the Congress of Micronesia, but in the whole quest for change in political status. It lies deep in the Micronesian national character.

There is an irrationality and impulsiveness about our people which often results in actions that are haphazard and contradictory. A long tradition of isolation and provincialism makes us narrowminded and dogmatic, reluctant to discard prejudices and slow to adopt even necessary changes and improvements if they require a new concept. Indecisive and hesitant, we succumb readily to conceit. Opportunistic, but lacking a spirit of daring and independence, we are wont to place reliance on others. Our want of rationality often leads us to confused desires and a confused view of reality, and thus to do things without careful planning. We have a false sense of pride, when American visitors come to our houses or villages, we start talking in English to them and to our dogs, speaking in native tongue only to our small children. In short, as a nation or race, we lack maturity of mind and the necessary conditioning to enable us to know when and what to sacrifice for the sake of our main goal.

Dag Hammarskjold once said that "The longest journey is the journey inward". Micronesia need not travel far, either, to find its real enemy. It is us.