

Asking For Moon.....

When we were kids we used to call it: "Monkey see—monkey do." Roughly it stems from the tendency people have, like monkeys, to imitate others. In human relations there is also an envy concept, when we see that others, perhaps less qualified than ourselves, are getting something better than we are, it naturally makes us eager to leap up and claim our just rewards.

Politically, these views can be expressed on Guam, as we look about us towards what other places have done in political status. First, we tended to admire Hawaii, and Alaska and their statehood status. Then, we watch with some interest how the people of Papua-New Guinea move confidently into self determination. We've seen, over the last 25-30 years, dozens of countries gain their independence. Not all of them have prospered from this new status. Surprisingly too, some of the places who have successfully sought and gained either complete autonomy, or independence, are even smaller than Guam in population, land size, or in potential wealth.

The note on envy of others is especially valid in these islands. The people of Saipan and the northern Marianas look at the benefits of Commonwealth in Puerto Rico, and naturally lean in that direction in contemplation of their own future. Guam, not to be outdone, is terribly concerned; lest her sister islands wind up with a better deal than we have.

In view of the above, it was especially interesting to read a recent editorial in the Honolulu Advertiser, probably written by editorial page editor John Griffin, which concludes on this note: "Hawaii as a state of the union is not in the same league (as Micronesia and Guam) at this point. BUT if the other offshore American areas get special consideration in such fields as shipping and immigration that should be of more than passing interest here where some officials have talked about the same thing."

In other words it won't be easy for Guam (or Micronesia, or the Marianas) to get all kinds of special treatment from the U.S. in terms of such things as foreign air landing rights, regulation of television and radio, or immigration, coastwise shipping laws allowing use of foreign vessels; a special way for fixing minimum wages, and other similar benefits. Just because the several states, including Hawaii, would quite naturally object to seeing the remote islands coming up with a better program than they receive as a state.

Puerto Rico's commonwealth status is a special one. It is neither a territory headed for statehood, nor one destined for independence, although those options are still open. We think that when the U.S. Congress set up the commonwealth status, they were still thinking in terms of eventual statehood for Puerto Rico. Yet, on the surface, it looks as Puerto Rico has its cake, and is eating it too. Now both President Nixon, and Gov. Rafael Hernandez Colon have named members to a committee to study and make recommendations for possible changes in the commonwealth's relations with the Federal government. Already they have a common market with U.S., a common currency and common citizenship, which allows the free movement of Puerto Ricans to and from the U.S. Mainland.

As we said, Guam, or the Marianas might not come up with everything they want for fear of envy, a natural envy from the states, but we think it's important that we follow the negotiations of the Puerto Rico committee to see what they do decide. It may be that we'll eventually want to ask for the same thing. JCM.