

Editorial

Important Visit.....

There is absolutely nothing like first hand observation of a problem.

And happily, the U.S. Congress seems to agree. In recent years there have been several visitations by various congressional delegations, and all have been useful in acquainting members of the U.S. Congress with the peculiar problems and needs of the territory.

Next week, barring any hang-ups, Guam and the Trust Territory will again be given the opportunity to talk to members of the House Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs. The long trip by these members is appreciated, particularly because there are no votes out here in the islands, and we're sure that most of the committee members would prefer being in their home districts, doing their annual fence mending.

The committee expects to spend three days on Guam, arriving next Thursday, Jan. 3, and arriving on Saipan on Sunday, Jan. 6. It's called a familiarization tour, but several members of the group have made the swing through the islands frequently, and should be familiar with the basic problems. There is always change, though, and it is a good sign that our Congressional friends want to keep abreast of them.

The delegation will be headed by Subcommittee Chairman Phillip Burton (D-Calif.) and will be accompanied, for the first time, by Guam's own Congressman, A.B. Won Pat, who is now a full-fledged, voting member of the Subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs.

In a memorandum to members of the Subcommittee, Chairman Burton said that the principal purpose of the trip is "to permit the Subcommittee to examine at first-hand the current situation in Guam and the Trust Territory, particularly with respect to pending legislation before the Committee."

He added that information gathered from the trip "will be extremely useful to us during the continuing round of status talks between Guam and Washington, as well as for the Micronesian talks." He noted that any results of the status talks (Micronesian and Northern Marianas) will eventually have to be ratified by Congress. He also said that "the political and economic situation of these areas is changing so rapidly, that we cannot afford to stand back and let others do the talking if we truly want to be aware of what manner of legislation will be needed to improve the quality of life and to give the people of Guam and the Trust Territory the degree of political autonomy they rightfully deserve."

It should be a good time to bring up Guam's ultimate relationship with the Northern Marianas to the Congressmen. It should be a good time to bring up the military land situation on Guam, including the Sella Bay issue, and the Joint Use agreement on Brewer Field. It should be a good time to get their reaction to a constitutional convention, and the possibility of two separate constitutional conventions going on at the same time in the Marianas. It should be a good time to bring up air landing rights on Guam, and the Jones Act in shipping, and the oil situation. There are plenty of items that the people of Guam can take up with the members of the Subcommittee - and it is important that we think about some of these in advance. We don't often have this opportunity, and we should take advantage of it.

While on Guam, the Subcommittee members and staff will confer with Governor Camacho and his staff, with members of the legislature, and with other civilian and military officials. At least the island is not being ignored, and perhaps we can think the cold weather on the mainland for this. JCM