

A Blow For Freedom.....

We've discovered a simple truism -- one which applies to nations as well as individuals. That is, a guy, or a country, is only too glad to help out his neighbor in any way, as long as his own needs are taken care of first.

And, sadly enough, this philosophy is going to be applied to the Micronesians by the Americans, despite some grand hopes by the Micronesia people that they would at last be set free after 450 years of domination by outsiders.

For years Peace Corpsmen, liberal Americans, and others have all but convinced a good many of the Micronesian leaders that all they have to do is but ask, and the United States, that great lover of freedom, will not only let them have their independence, but will finance it for them as well.

Sorry, but it isn't going to work that way.

Despite the long, hard years of negotiating between the Micronesians and Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams, we just don't think that the American people, through their congressmen, are ready to turn Micronesia loose. We also think that Ambassador Williams, himself, has been honest with the Micronesians in the negotiations, but that he may not have recognized the changing mood of Congress in those negotiations.

Recently Williams briefed members of the Senate Interior Committee on the details of the proposed new relationship between the U.S. and Micronesia. Members told newsmen later that Williams had made an effective presentation of the proposed "free association" compact, and there were no serious objections raised among the half-dozen committee members who attended. That sounds very nice. Except for one "but" raised by Sen. James A. McClure, R. Idaho.

The news story read: "But McClure told Williams that whatever agreements the U.S. reaches with Micronesia it must include long-term provisions against any other nation using the islands for military purposes. Although the proposed compact gives the U.S. exclusive military rights to the islands, McClure urged Williams to secure that exclusive franchise beyond the life of the compact. Without doing that, McClure cautioned, the U.S. might lose the legal basis for its military installations when the compact expired or was terminated."

We're convinced that while most U.S. Congressmen are firm believers in Portugal turning loose their African colonies, they are not so keen about the U.S. turning loose their Pacific colonies.

We're further convinced that "Free Association," or "Independence" or "Commonwealth," or whatever you choose to call it, will be completely meaningless as long as the U.S. includes in its agreement that no other nation could ever use the islands for military purposes. That would be akin to somebody selling a piece of land, but retaining the option of telling the new owner what could be put on that land. That's not sovereignty in any sense of the word. The Micronesians, it appears, will continue to be under the U.S. rule. We're not saying that is entirely bad, but we are saying that it appears to be a fact.

U.S. Congressmen, and we believe that includes the majority of them, are not about to turn over any islands in the Pacific right now, or in the foreseeable future for three reasons:

1. The recent discovery of vast mineral deposits under the sea floor of Micronesia, and the possibility of oil exploration in the Pacific in the future.

2. The increasing interest of the Soviet Navy in the Pacific, and the potential danger to U.S. Pacific routes.

3. The possibility that Japan may again, through business interests and tourism, return in strength to the islands. The spectre of World War II still is too great among members of the U.S. Congress, most of whom served in that war.

The U.S., while professing to believe in self determination isn't about to grant any real freedom to the islanders. Sen. McClure's statement merely confirms what we thought all along, that despite Ambassador Williams' insistence that Congress would go along with the negotiations, they will not -- unless provisions are inserted in the pact that will insure continued U.S. domination. To the Micronesians we can only say that we're sorry that they happen to live in a place that the U.S. needs. The U.S., with its 200,000,000 people have to be considered first over the needs of a 100,000 Micronesians. Their dreams of island independence, 450 years after Magellan, are merely an illusion. JCM.

Whistling In Dark.....

We're wondering, too, if the Micronesians are being a bit naive in their insistence on Micronesian participation, ownership and management in business ventures in Micronesia.

That all sounds good, but in practice, we just wonder if it is realistic.

Recently, the Japan-Hawaii Economic Council, sitting in Saipan, were told that Micronesia welcomes foreign investment -- and that includes U.S. investment -- but "only when ample opportunity is given to Micronesian participation, ownership and management." What they are doing is offering businessmen from the U.S., Japan, or any other nation to join in business projects on an equal basis with the Micronesians. Such investments, Eusebio Rechucher, Micronesia's director of resources and development said, must be on terms which will leave...control of our lands, resources and industries in the hands of the Micronesian people."

Micronesia lacks land, it lacks raw materials, it is short of skilled labor, it has no market, it has limited transportation and communication, it has a sparse infrastructure such as electricity, and water, and it is located vast distances from supplies. If, now, it puts too strict a restriction on business ventures, it is extremely likely that few businessmen would want to risk any capital in any venture.

Most developing nations, searching desperately for capital to provide jobs and a gross national product go to the other extreme, lowering their standards to bring investment capital in. The Micronesians seem to be trying to make it even more difficult for any business ventures. We're not saying that they are completely wrong. Only time will tell. We do believe that their development is going to be an extremely slow and painful one, however, considering their present attitude. JCM.