

Pipe Dreams

By Joe Murphy



Friday, all day, I sat in on that political status seminar-workshop at the University of Guam, and managed to acquire enough material to keep me writing for weeks. It was a good session, highly informative, and one that hopefully will be repeated from time to time, to keep the "dialogue" going between the different islands. There was just enough "anti-Americanism" in some of the statements to make me wish I had taken the time to acquire a better tan. But then, nobody ever said that the Americans were good colonizers, or even good administrators. While there has been some "I don't give a damn" attitude (by Kissinger), and "we need these islands and to heck with the people," mostly I think our hearts have been in the right place.

Like former Gov. Carlton Skinner pointed out Guam was really the first island in the Pacific to get any form of self-government, in 1950, followed by Western Samoa, in 1962; The Cook Islands in 1964; Nauru in 1968, and Fiji in 1970, with Papua-New Guinea going that route this year. Since 1950 Guam has made additional steps towards real self-government, especially with the elective governor thing. Admittedly, there are still some areas of concern, but we just have to work towards them.

One of the questions I asked the Micronesians concerned their attitude towards the military. What happens, I said, if you become independent? Who defends you? The answer, and a pretty good one by Dr. Frank Palacios of Saipan, was that in today's world no group of islands have to worry about being attacked, because the major powers wouldn't allow it. He pointed to the island of Nauru as an example. They have no defense posture, and apparently don't need one.

True, I guess. But I wondered what would happen if a group of Japanese fishing boats anchored off the shore of Saipan, or Yap, or Palau? Who would chase them away? Or without the military, who will provide the navigational aides necessary for shipping? Or the air-sea rescue? Or the weather forecasting? I suppose too, that the Paracel Islands, and the Spratly islands might set an example against the thinking that no major power would dare try to occupy islands in these day and age.