

Editorial

All Of The Islands.....

Will wonders never cease?

After years of Guam being studiously avoided by the Micronesians in the Political Status Talks, it appears that for the first time, members of the Guam Political Status Commission will sit down with the Micronesian Joint-Committee on Future Status.

We're not blaming the Micronesians, entirely, for this dismal time period of pretending that Guam doesn't exist as an island of the Western Pacific. After all, the people of Guam, and its leaders have never before offered the Micronesians an opportunity for dialogue over the political future of the islands. Besides, U.S. Ambassador F. Haydn Williams has taken the public position that as long as the Guamanian people are American citizens, then he, as the president's personal representative at the talks, represents the people of Guam at the talks.

Sen. Lazarus Salii announced Tuesday that the Joint Committee on Future Status has accepted an invitation from the Guam Political Status Commission to a meeting in April on Guam, to open a dialogue between the two groups on matters of mutual interest.

Guam Senator, Frank Lujan, chairman of the Guam Commission, extended the invitation, Salii reported, adding that Guam will provide accommodations and transportation for the 12 members of the Micronesian status group. He said the meeting will be sometime after April 15, to allow time for him and Rep. Ekpap Silk to return from California, where they will meet with Ambassador Williams to discuss resumption of the status talks between the Micronesians and the American negotiation team.

We applaud Sen. Lujan's initiative in this matter, a step which should have been undertaken years ago, but wasn't, probably because Guam didn't have a Political Status Commission of its own to issue an invitation of that sort.

The Guam-Micronesian talks undoubtedly will be unofficial, and informal. We doubt whether they will be public, although we would like to hope that they would be, so that the people of Guam would be immediately appraised of just what is being discussed.

It may be that the Guam-Micronesian talks, in establishing a dialogue, could be of particular importance over the apparent intention of the Marshalls Nitijela (their legislature) to seek separate talks with the U.S. government for the Marshalls.

The Marshalls session opened last Monday, called together by Speaker Atlan Anien, who called them "perhaps the most important 30 days in the history of the Marshalls."

The Marshallese are very unhappy with the Congress of Micronesia for failing to pass legislation for revenue sharing based upon the district's contribution to the funds brought in through taxes.

Sen. Amata Kabua told the opening session of the Nitijela that: "I am sorry to announce to you, the Nitijela and the people of the Marshalls that the Congress of Micronesia has again betrayed the people of the Marshall Islands. This is the third time that the congress has failed to recognize the freely expressed wishes and aspirations of the Marshallese people." He pointed out that Ponape, Truk and Yap districts opposed such revenue sharing, while the Marianas—opting for separate talks themselves, and the Palau district favored the sharing. Some of the Palauan leaders have expressed a wish for the formation of a loosely-knit federation of island groups, rather than any strong federal government. It is just possible that Guam could fit into such a federation, although it hasn't been proposed as yet, and certainly there has been no public reaction to such an alignment.

But it is certain that Guam isn't an island all by itself, out here in the midst of a barren Pacific. It is just another, of a chain of islands, called the Marianas. It is a part and parcel of all the islands of the Western Pacific, all of which are now struggling to find some identity for themselves, and to look into this remarkable new concept called "self determination," a principal normally espoused by the United States.

The Marshalls, concerned that a large percentage of income tax revenues are collected from the large Army installation on Kwajalein, heard Sen. Kabua say: "our people have sacrificed their lands and now constantly live in fear of the awesome military might of not only the United States, but of those who might consider Kwajalein a target."

He asked: "Would it not be more appropriate for these people to benefit from the revenue? What logic is there in giving away these locally generated monies to the people of the west whose lives have not been disrupted by the military and who have consistently insisted that they do not wish to have the U.S. bases on their land?"

He concluded that: The more we think about it, the more we realize how the rest of Micronesia has made fools out of the people of the Marshalls."

Indeed, it sounds serious.

We don't know what is on the minds of the Guam Political Status Commission as far as political future goes. Undoubtedly many of them would think in terms of the Senator from the Marshalls, as regards the military, and revenues derived from the military. If there are islands who are opposed to the military, then fine, let them be, but then don't expect to sit by and profit from the military establishment in the other districts and other islands.

The idea of a loose federation of islands of the Western Pacific—with strong local rule, and strong autonomy—certainly has some appeal for Guam, as well as it apparently does for Palau, the Marianas, and the Marshalls. We applaud Guam's first show of initiative in trying to sit down with the various other islanders to explore the political future of all of the islands—Guam included. We continue to reject the idea that Ambassador Williams speaks for the Guamanian people in his talks. JCM.