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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

★ news release

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REMARKS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR., AT AGANA, GUAM, MARCH 9, 1963 (MARCH 8 IN THE UNITED STATES) AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE HON. MANUEL F. L. GUERRERO AS GOVERNOR OF THE TERRITORY OF GUAM

My designation as the representative of the Department of the Interior on this happy occasion is a matter of great personal pleasure and satisfaction. A little less than two years ago I took my turn on this rostrum to honor another Governor. Then two months ago, I came to Guam again--but on a mission of a far different sort--to survey and discuss the disaster of last fall and your plans for reconstruction.

But both of those occasions had one common factor which made them memorable and satisfying. That was the presence, the quiet effectiveness, the uniform good will and the pleasant personality of the man we honor today. I should have been greatly disappointed to have missed the special pleasure and privilege of seeing Manuel Guerrero sworn into the office he has so richly earned.

I am here not only to convey the most sincere congratulations and earnest good wishes of the Secretary of the Interior, but also to assure you of the great confidence in Guam's future which is held by all of those on the Department's staff who have come to know and appreciate Governor Guerrero's great talents. To these I add my own expression of immense satisfaction that the President has chosen such a fitting representative of Guam to provide leadership in this critical period of its history.

Two years ago I announced the policy of the present national Administration in the management of territorial affairs. That policy is one of increasing reliance on the innate competence of our territories to manage their own local affairs in accordance with the highest American traditions of self-government. That continues to be the guiding principle of our relationships with the several Territories, but especially with Guam and the Virgin Islands whose readiness for such responsibility has been recognized and formalized in organic legislation.

This policy is more than hollow rhetoric. I am confident that Governor Guerrero, former Governor Daniel, and your legislative leaders will testify that they have encountered an absolute minimum of Federal interference or regimentation as to any matters which are purely or primarily local in their scope. We extend at all times the hand of assistance and support and facilities for consultation and advice. But the power to decide remains with you, through the political institutions you are molding to the peculiarities of your geography, your economy and your culture.

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Our conviction to this principle has not gone unchallenged. There are those who characterize it as a dereliction of Federal responsibility. It is criticized as the course of least resistance by some who would have us review in detail every local decision and impose the judgment of Big Brother hindsight. These pressures have been resisted; I am confident that such resistance will be continued, unremittingly.

As to the criticism that our policy is one of buck-passing, the easy way out, the truth of the matter lies in precisely the opposite direction. There have been occasions, happily infrequent ones, when our judgment counseled a different course from that taken at the Territorial level--whether at Agana, St. Thomas, Pago Pago, or Saipan. The human reaction in such cases, particularly if conditioned by the experience of supervising subordinate bureaus in the executive establishment, is to intercede, to reverse, to veto, to order corrective action. This is the easy course for those holding responsibility and having the naked authority to influence action.

But the policy of which I speak is in the nature of a self-denying ordinance, a commitment to restraint. The impulse to dictate solutions, however subtly, is an affront to and a cynical retreat from any sincere commitment to the philosophy of self-government.

It is even more than that. We learn as much from our mistakes as from correct decisions, often more so because the consequences of error leave lasting impressions. More fundamentally, the right to decide includes the right to be wrong! Actions to limit the latter, however noble in their conception, work an erosion of the basic philosophy. Progress toward total competence in the art of government must not be impeded by over-solicitous guardianship which isolates the political body from the experience of being mistaken.

There is another side to this subject, however--one that needs emphasis equal to that accorded the basic premise. There is a law of compensation in government as well as in nature; every right carries with it a balancing duty; authority is tempered by responsibility. Social and political morality depend upon full acceptance of and dedication to these obligations, as well as enjoyment and exercise of the benefits. When rights are insisted upon and authority exercised without equal emphasis on duties and responsibilities, then the fabric of democracy is ruptured. One need not subscribe to the tenets of Marx or Hitler to qualify as an enemy of democracy. A rampant majority trampling on the rights and dignity of its fellow citizens is equally a denial of its ethical basis. Our system can only survive when the people have confidence that its ideals are being observed. Loss of that confidence breeds cynicism and abandonment of determination to support and defend it.

In our territorial structure, this balance of responsibility has two primary aspects: the relationship between Federal and local interest and the balance between government and citizen.

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More than any other community in the American commonwealth, the people of Guam have had unfortunate occasion to demonstrate their allegiance, loyalty and commitment to its values. This is beyond question now if it were ever open to any other conclusion. The Organic Act of Guam was the partial response of a grateful United States. By its terms, the substantive guarantees of human rights assured by the Federal constitution were extended to the citizens of Guam who were also formally accorded United States citizenship. Our relationship is therefore sealed by a mutual act of faith. The strength of the United States is committed to the protection of this community whose citizens are accorded a wide degree of latitude to regulate their own affairs within the framework of our political philosophy.

But since the source of your governmental power is Federal--your Organic Act was an Act of Congress, signed by the President--it must never be forgotten that there remains a purely Federal interest which must be respected and preserved. The process of local self-government must be conducted in the context of continuing respect for this interest. The Governor whom we see inaugurated today assumes a comparatively rare position--paralleled precisely by only one other. He is the executive head of a self-governing body politic. He is also a Federal officer charged to uphold its laws and to be sensitive to its interests. He may not act in one capacity in a manner which would be detrimental to the other.

But this responsibility is not confined to the Governor alone. He symbolizes the position of the community and its elected representatives. Local self-interest must be tempered by consideration for the broader national interest, but with particular reference to the special conditions which prevail in Guam. The delicacy of this balance and the need for cooperation and understanding are major factors which make us appreciate and welcome the assumption of office by Governor Guerrero.

Turning now to the internal aspects of responsible self-government, I would impose upon you no more demanding a standard than I would Idaho, or California, or Mississippi. But even the common standard established for all American communities is a demanding one, difficult to achieve under the most ideal conditions.

Its beacon lights are integrity and competence in administration, coupled with due process and equal protection of the laws in policy conception. I refer to these basic standards not in narrow legal terms, but in the broadest concept of social motivation. Every person touched by the power of governmental authority has the right to have his legitimate interests carefully and sincerely considered. Citizen or alien, entrepreneur or wage earner, resident or transient, native or newcomer--all are entitled to fair treatment. Distinctions based on class are indefensible. Distinctions based on situation may be tolerated only where required by a heavy preponderance of necessity in the achievement of a significant public policy objective.

Democratic institutions are founded upon the tested principle of majority rule. But a sound philosophy of democratic living must undergird such

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institutions and it places equal weight upon the sanctity of minority rights-- the right to be heard, the right to genuine consideration, the right to appeal or redress, the right to be different without indignity. When we abandon these ideals, the system is no longer democratic but the mob rule that the prophets of freedom and human dignity have counseled against through the centuries.

The term "minority rights" has in some quarters suffered a distortion that limits it to connotations of skin pigmentation, cultural origin or religious practice. We must not be so limited in our view of so important a principle. Not only does that narrow view work a denial of basic protections to those who merely think differently, but it also cultivates an insidious psychology leading to future mischief. When the cultural, racial or religious minority becomes dominant, there is no tradition which requires it to respect those who have slipped from control.

The hopes and aspirations which we expressed two years ago remain undimmed. Guam continues to symbolize the American governmental ideal at the edge of an alien sphere of influence. Tried anew in the crucible of adversity, you have confirmed our faith in the capacity of our common institutions not only to survive but to provide the framework for reconstruction under local leadership and momentum.

There has been no pause in the march toward increased self-government. Every governmental act which demonstrates further competence and experience is a step toward the common goal. But when we accept the power to govern we must be mindful of the obligations and responsibilities which accompany it.

No one individual can bear this burden alone. Its components must be a living force in the community, reflected in its representative body. The moral tone which exists in this community lends assurance that Governor Guerrero will have united support in conducting public affairs on the high ethical plane demanded by our democratic ideals.

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