

Remarks by Dr. Gibson at Briefing
Session for Mrs. Van Cleve, June 26, 1964

Mrs. Van Cleve, Mr. Goding and colleagues - This is an auspicious occasion for me. I welcome the opportunity to give an accounting of the work of the Department of Education to the new Director of the Office of Territories and to celebrate an occasion. It is exactly 13 years ago today that I first joined the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in Honolulu as Director of Education and as I look around this group I see only two others who were here before me.

I well remember the spirit of idealism which actuated me in those early days - an idealism largely engendered by the lofty pronouncements of the United Nations, the leadership of our first High Commissioner, Senator Elbert Thomas, and my own desire to do my part to keep a pledge to the Trusteeship Council that we would pursue the goal of educational advancement for the inhabitants of Trust Territory.

I think it was my convictions and idealism which kept my eyes focussed on the goal through long years of living on practically a starvation budget, when scarcely a minimum of educational growth could be achieved. However, despite having to operate on a yearly budget for 10 years of less than \$500,000 we did initiate a program of universal elementary education; we developed in each district a system of junior high schools; we did have a very excellent senior high school; we did develop a teacher education program and we had made considerable advance in developing a scholarship program.

So that you may have some basis of comparison, Mrs. Van Cleve, I am going to compare the figures spent on education in Trust Territory with those spent on Guam during the same period, pointing out as I do so that on Guam about the same number of children had to be educated and that they were all concentrated on one island. They went to school by bus, not by boat, or plane as our youngsters did, nor did they have to be subsisted at the junior and senior high levels in boarding schools. When we were spending \$500,000 per year on education, Guam was spending 3 - 4 million for the same number of students.

I can report, perhaps with some pride, that every member of the present Council of Micronesia and three of the four members of the leader grant program who attended the recent Trusteeship Council Meeting have been products of the educational system we provided. I note that in the UN Report of 1964 this was said:

"In retrospect, it is a matter for surprise that so much was in fact accomplished, particularly in the fields of education and health; the Territory has fortunately had the services of not a few able and devoted specialists and administrators who did their best with such resources as they were given, while making no secret of their view that the results were inadequate."

During the last two years my hopes have risen. Last year's upping of the budget from 7½ million to 15 million gave education its first opportunity to flex its muscles and to do many of the things which up to now had to remain in the realm of activities only "devoutly to be wished".

How have we spent this money? We have imported 60 new American teachers to help man the elementary schools; we have built housing for these teachers and we have constructed, or are in the process of constructing and adequately supplying 48 new classrooms. We are adding 90 more American teachers this fall to those already here in the elementary schools. We are continuing to provide these teachers with adequate housing and to keep on building new elementary schools until every child in Micronesia has a decent school to attend. We intend to supply and equip these schools with the best in teaching materials and other facilities. So far we have largely concentrated on elementary schools but we haven't allowed the secondary program to lag. From one central secondary school, we have moved to a secondary school in every district. This means a new building program which we have already started. It means bringing out more qualified American teachers. Our scholarship program doubled last year and is doubling again this year. Such progress in such a short time has brought soaring problems in some of which other departments share. You can well imagine what such a vast increase in activity has meant to our Public Works, our Supply, our Transportation and Communication, our Personnel and even to our Health Departments. They have been as beset as I with the manifold problems which have surrounded us.

As for our particular problems in education, they involve those associated with recruiting and orienting new teachers and then providing them with the necessary supervision so that they understand and grow on their job; we are concerned with problems of schoolhouse planning; of the continuous process of building, evaluating and re-building school curricula; of making English the lingua franca of Trust Territory; of developing a vocational program which will meet the growing needs of Micronesia; of taking care of the many problems related to a scholarship program in which more than 100 students hold total or partial scholarships in higher education; we are involved further with the problems associated with preparing and administering budgets for such an expanded program, and those of supervising and standardizing textbooks, other teaching materials and equipment.

One of the largest problems of all is the inadequacy of my own staff to handle the greatly increased complexity of these problems. There are now five people in my office - plus a Micronesian secretary and clerk. One of those five spends his full time with Personnel on recruitment - one has just been added as Coordinator of the Adult Education program, a recently acquired

administrative assistant is in charge of the Scholarship program. I have had to share more and more of the administrative work with Dr. Bender. His willingness to spend his free time, his innate ability and intelligence have made it possible for him to do this as well as to conduct an outstanding program in the teaching of English.

Finally, I think this is a good occasion on my 13th anniversary of service to announce my retirement from Trust Territory. I have my letter of resignation to Mr. Goding to take effect as of June 30.

Since those of you who are my friends and colleagues know it is not in the Gibson tradition to give up in the face of difficulty and frustration, I think I must tell you how this came about.

Three years ago I came back from leave with the inference that the position of Director of Education would be upgraded. You will remember that the Solomon Report made the same recommendation, along with a greatly increased staff for the office of the Director of Education. If I remember correctly it described the staff as "Pitifully inadequate even for its present holding action."

Those of you who read the Reading Files may remember a letter from the High Commissioner to the Director of the Office of Territories making a recommendation that the Director of Education be promoted to a Grade 14 and that the vacancy of Assistant Director of Education be filled with a GS-13. But nothing ever came of it.

This week when Mr. Goding returned he told me that the position was to be upgraded to a GS-15. I, however, would remain at my present rating and somebody else would be given the top position.

This isn't because I haven't done my job. All of you know that. It is a newly conceived way of getting rid of somebody who didn't always say "Yes" and who felt it his duty to disagree with Mr. Carver or to inform him of things he ought to know for the benefit of the people of Trust Territory.

I shall leave you, my colleagues, with regret and some fears of your security. I shall leave this job, which I have loved, with some foreboding. I would say that we need to give greater concern to those basic human values which are an essential part of our democratic tradition; that to negate them, as some have done, is self-defeating; that those who ignore the worth and dignity of the individual human personality, whether of student, teacher, government employee, or just plain private citizen are as dangerous to America's goals as the subversive.

I trust I have left some little heritage on the positive side of this picture.