

Introduction

THE DISTANCE between Washington, D.C., and Micronesia is great. Washington has ignored this area for a long time. Its policy toward Micronesia in the last twenty-odd years has not been consistent. At one time, its policy was to keep Micronesia out of the mainstream of the twentieth-century world, a policy popularly known in Micronesia as the "zoo philosophy." This policy was rejected by the Micronesians. Later on, beginning with the Kennedy administration, an altogether different policy was adopted, one designed to accelerate the educational, social, economic, and political processes. Coincidental with this later approach, attempts were made to bring Micronesia politically closer to the American system. Actions were taken to incorporate Micronesia as a U.S. territory; commonwealth status was also offered. Both were rejected by Micronesians.

When it became apparent to Micronesians that Washington was in fact disregarding the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement and was trying to annex their islands, steps were immediately taken by the Congress of Micronesia to institute the process of decolonization and the future political status negotiations. Free association or independence, should free association prove unacceptable to the United States, were proclaimed the goals of Micronesia by the Congress of Micronesia.

As Micronesia nears the achievement of her goal, however, the forces of disunity within our country are beginning to emerge, causing great difficulty in achieving a united front and the settlement of the status issue. This dilemma is one of the many prob-

lems creating difficulty not only between the Joint Committee on Future Status and the U.S. delegation, but also between the districts and among the members of the Congress. In addition, there is the problem of the conflict between the old and the new, for the traditional past is still very much a part of us, as is modernization and the rising level of expectations it has brought.

In the quest for change, there is also the problem of identity. Can Micronesia find her way to the right form of political status for herself? Only time can tell. Micronesia, too, must change internally; she cannot hope to find her future in this struggle if she is unwilling to exact reforms within herself.

Thus, Micronesia's challenge is not confined to the struggle against the outside forces of colonialism, it is also the need to recognize and accept internal change where change is necessary, necessary not only to Micronesia as a whole, but to the individual districts as well.

Economic, political, and social forces are flowing with a tidal sweep over communities and villages throughout Micronesia that are only half conscious of their occurrence. Wise statesmen are those who foresee what time has brought, and endeavor to shape institutions and to mold men's thoughts and purposes in accordance with the change that is silently overtaking Micronesia.

And, so, burdened by internal dissension, challenged by the task ahead, Micronesia struggles toward freedom and the building of a nation state.