

Summary Remarks

by

Dr. Donald M. Topping

Director, Social Science Research Institute

University of Hawaii at Manoa

To call these remarks a summary of the conference is presumptive, since it implies that all of those in attendance have forgotten what was said, while I somehow remembered. It will be better to think of my comments as one person's impressions of some of the things that were said, as well as some of the things unsaid.

Before going into the content area of the conference, I will echo Carl Daeufer's second call for a Pacific Islands Association. Anyone interested should get in touch with him. It may be that such an organization already exists de facto through the Pacific Islands Newsletter and the Pacific Islands Interest Group which meets irregularly, but frequently, for the main purpose of meeting with travelers from both sides of the Pacific representing a wide range of interests. Anyone wishing to be put on the mailing list for either the newsletter or the meetings just fill out the green sheet, or get in touch with the PIP office.

Mr. Hideto Kono, Director of the State of Hawaii's Department of Planning and Economic Development, and formerly a high ranking official of one of Hawaii's famous multinational corporations, Castle and Cooke, opened the conference on Friday evening with an overview of the State of Hawaii's role in the emerging Pacific scene.

His remarks were basically a summary of a recent DPED publication titled "Hawaii and the Other Pacific Islands," the title of which is already becoming

a catch phrase. Only recently has the State of Hawaii begun to identify itself with the "other" Pacific islands, rather than as an extension of Los Angeles or Tokyo.

Mr. Kono's theme was that Hawaii stands ready to help show the way to successful development in the other Pacific islands, especially in the areas of:

- a. Agriculture
- b. Tourism
- c. Alternative Energy Sources
- d. Communications
- e. Free Trade Zones.

There now exists the need to build on these, and more, e.g., cultural exchanges.

Mr. Kono reminded us of the existence of the Pacific Islands Development Commission, whose membership includes the four governors of the American flag property in the Pacific (Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas), and whose function is to "promote." He went on to suggest the need for a Regional Development Commission, but the statement of purpose remained unclear as well as its relationship to the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation (SPEC).

Mr. Kono's talk failed to include one rather important aspect of Hawaii's new role as a fellow/sister Pacific Island. That is, the image of Hawaii and the Hawaiians in the eyes of those Pacific Islanders to whom Hawaii is offering the helping hand. For example, the following:

1. Unresolved Hawaii land claims against State and Federal governments.
2. State sanction of continued bombing of Kahoolawe.
3. Token Hawaiian representation in the State government.
4. Generally low socio-economic status of Hawaiians, Samoans, and

Tongans living in the state.

5. Low level of support for Polynesian cultural matters (e.g., museum, Hawaiian language instruction.)
6. Minimal support (1/2 position) for the Pacific Islands Studies Program at the University of Hawaii.
7. Use of Hawaiian Islands as a storehouse for armed nuclear warheads.

It would appear that the State of Hawaii needs to get its own house in better order before making overtures to the "other" Pacific Islands, whose citizens are well aware of the history of exploitation of the Hawaiian people.

The day following Mr. Kono's speech, Mr. Fred Rohlfig, Attorney General for American Samoa, presented his vision of American Samoa's role in the Pacific. Not surprisingly, Mr. Rohlfig, a Hawaii-born lawyer and erstwhile politician, sees American Samoa as ready to take a leadership role, following the pattern set forth by Mr. Kono, in the development of the emerging Pacific states.

According to Mr. Rohlfig, American Samoa is already prepared to play a central role in regional development. The requisite infrastructure is already there: island-wide roads, electrification, sewage and water; satellite communications; deep water harbor; international airport; island-wide television reception; and two malodorous fish canneries as a basis for further industrial development.

In addition to the already existing infrastructure, American Samoa now has its first elected governor, Mr. Peter Tali Coleman, who, since his election in November, 1978, has been working to establish closer personal connections with other Pacific Island leaders.

The American Samoa game plan is set. All the pieces are in place. The big question is: Why doesn't it work?

Not mentioned by Mr. Rohlfing is the question of incentive of the people of American Samoa. In spite of all the appropriate conditions for economic development in American Samoa, why do the people continue to leave the island in droves for Honolulu, San Diego, and other Samoan communities on the west coast?

There are, of course, no easy answers to this question, but one might consider the nature of the development of the highly touted infrastructure in American Samoa, which, in fact, is alien in every respect, and was developed with minimal Samoan participation. The infrastructure as described by Mr. Rohlfing is an alien concept, funded by alien capital, and built by alien labor. Is it any wonder, then, that it has not worked well in American Samoa? Could one expect other Pacific Islands states to want to plug into a non-working system that has failed to provide economic development for the people of American Samoa?

Although it was not mentioned by Mr. Rohlfing, there may be a parallel between the American Samoan style of development and the highly criticized dependency programs in Micronesia.

Dr. Ben Finney's portrayal of the state of affairs in French Polynesia, an area that gets little attention in the English language media, described a new type of colonialism, characterized as "military" colonialism. In this relationship the metropolitan power is neither extracting resources nor exploiting the population as targets for consumer goods (although a good bit of the latter is going on in French Polynesia). Rather, in the case of French Polynesia, the colonial power is basically paying a reasonably cheap rental fee for an atomic shooting gallery.

One cannot help noticing the parallel here between Mururoa and the Kwajalein Missile Range, with the attendant problems generated by a highly

artificial (and inflated) economy, and massive population shifts to the centers of Papeete and Ebeye in quest of the western bank note.

Dr. Finney also described past and present movements in French Polynesia for independence. Earlier post-war demands, under the leadership of Pouvanaa, were for independence. These were subdued by draconian measures on the part of the French government. More recently, one hears demands for internal self-government and more autonomy, which the French are willing to consider.

Political activists, such as Charlie Ching, are still carrying the banner against French colonialism, and see the promised new form of self-government as the same old game with the same old rules and the same old players. Only the names have been changed.

Are the political rebels in French Polynesia having any effect on developments there? The fact that the March issue of the Pacific Islands Monthly carried Charlie Ching's picture on the cover may be some indication.

Two anthropologists' views on the question of developing dependency relationships were presented by Drs. Craig Severance and Michael Hamnett.

Dr. Severance, speaking from his work on Piis-Losap atoll in the Truk District of Micronesia, concluded that, all things considered, federal largesse is detrimental to an atoll society. In particular, federal assistance through food and make-work programs serves as a disincentive to self-reliance.

In addition, Dr. Severance observed a clear breakdown in the social order of Piis-Losap resulting from the introduced food distribution system, i.e., equal portions per capita, which stands in marked contrast to the traditional system of distribution by rank. It was also pointed out that the question of continued federal assistance programs in the Truk District has complicated local politics, in that some political candidates, in their bids for public offices, promised continued government welfare programs.

The new U.S. position on terminating federal programs will probably damage some political careers and foster disillusionment. Could this be construed as a tactic similar to that described by Dr. Finney, where the French, on leaving Guinea, tore the phones off the wall and ripped water pipes from the ground?

Dr. Hamnett's comparison of a Polynesian (Kapingamarangi) and a Melanesian (Atamo) society raises an important ideological question. If Polynesians, as he claims, are prone to dependency, as a result of traditional and environmental factors, does this place a special responsibility on the donors? Is it moral to knowingly create dependency when the recipient is happy to receive?

According to Dr. Hamnett, the Melanesians he lived with stressed independence in all phases of life. To them, dependence was a shameful state, one to be avoided at all costs. On the other hand, the Polynesians of Kapingamarangi, have always been content with a dependency relationship, whether with the gods, the missionaries, the traders, or the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Who is to say whether the dependency relationship is good or bad? A happy dependent society may be preferable to a frustrated but independent one. And maybe somewhere in between there lies the possibility of a happy medium.

In the area of geopolitics, Mr. William Bodde and Dr. Michael Godley spoke of the positions of two of the world's super powers, the United States and the People's Republic of China, and their recent, but growing, involvement in the Pacific area. The level of activities on the part of both countries is not large, but it is visible.

Both countries seem to be more or less content with the status quo, as long as the Big Bear is kept at bay. Both countries seem content with the concept of strategic denial--long an unspoken policy in Micronesia--with specific reference to the Soviets.

The U.S. has recently been negotiating with Tuvalu, the Gilbert Islands, and the Cooks over the legitimate claims of twenty-six disputed islands. While the U.S. is prepared to relinquish all claims of ownership--most of them having been based somewhat weakly on the provisions of the Guano Act--Uncle Sam still insists, as in the case of Micronesia, on "defense rights," or the right to defend. However, no one has yet defined the need for defense.

Are the Russians likely to invade Funafuti, Tarawa, or even Canton Island? Or is the defense right another term for strategic denial?

Dr. Godley pointed out that China is taking a very humble approach in the Pacific, and suggested that the U.S. might well do the same.

The theme of Mr. Bodde's talk was that the U.S. is doing exactly that.

The panel discussion on "Media's Role in Pacific Island Politics" dwelt largely on journalism as a relatively new form of communication in the Pacific, which faces many problems as it develops.

The most pervasive problem, as outlined by Dr. Jim Richstad, is that of the continued pattern of news flow along the lines of communication established during colonial times. There is still little movement of news across those political lines. Newly independent countries, according to Dr. Richstad, tend to take a somewhat broader view of the world, and attempt to garner and distribute news from other Third World Countries; however, the ties to the mother country remain dominant.

PEACESAT has helped transcend the lingering political boundaries, but several local governments have prohibited the redistribution of news by the local press, especially in those areas where the newspaper is owned and operated by the government, as was reported by Mr. Ngauea Uatinoa, Editor of the Atoll Pioneer (Gilbert Islands). Although a new law (January, 1979) was passed in the Gilberts to grant more independence to the press, the situation

there is still described as restrictive.

The need for an adversary press system was stressed by Mr. John Griffin, of the Honolulu Advertiser, and repeated by Mr. Kuar Singh, of the Fiji Sun, which now offers competition and an alternate voice to the long-established Fiji Times. Without such an adversary system, journalists run the risk of "joining the team," either of business or of government.

Ms. Leanne McLaughlin reported on the forthcoming development of journalistic competition in Guam with the beginning of a new daily sometime in the summer of 1979. Hopefully, it will fare better than previous competitors of the Pacific Daily News.

Related to the political and economic pressures on journalists to join the establishment, there are also social pressures on Pacific Island journalists, as described by Mr. Floyd Takeuchi, of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. The smallness of island societies tends to exacerbate this problem.

All of the media panelists agreed that there is a need for more local and pan-Pacific news coverage, better communication lines among journalists, and an independent adversary press.

Dr. Scott Allen and Dr. George Kent both spoke of the new ocean technology and how it is affecting international ocean policy. What they discussed is really the crux of the whole question that this conference is addressing: "The Emerging Pacific Island States."

While the inevitable course of decolonization finally began to unfold in the Pacific in the 1960s, the technology was being developed for the massive extraction of fish and mineral resources from the sea and its floor. Concurrently, there was the growing awareness of the shrinking and possible depletion of the earth's natural resources. The Pacific Ocean, covering one-third of the earth's surface, may be the last terrestrial frontier.



As long as the islands remained well-behaved colonies, there was no cause for concern. But, as new sovereign states, they must be reckoned with in the international political arena. Although the islands are small, there are many of them. All together, with their 200-mile exclusive economic zones, they have the entire Pacific Ocean well covered.

Who will have access to the emerging Pacific Island states and their waters is a matter of major concern.