
Regionalism: Goals and Expectations

*by Mr. Jerry B. Norris
Executive Director
Pacific Basin Development Council*

It goes without saying that I am honored to address the Sixth Annual Pacific Islands Studies Conference. Over the last nine months, I have had the opportunity of working with or attending many of the activities sponsored by the Pacific Islands Studies Program and the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, and have benefited greatly from those meetings and from the individuals that I have met.

The Pacific Basin Development Council (PBDC), is a very young organization. It was established in early 1980 by the Governors of the three American Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the State of Hawaii. PBDC addresses and articulates, through its Board of Directors, the economic and social development concerns of the Pacific Islands. I was apprehensive about "going public" before we were at least a year old. Also, the organization is, as with any new organization, seeking its own level on almost a day-to-day basis. I was not sure that I could adequately articulate the views of the Governors...which brings me to a point that I would like stress. My comments, although many of them mirror both individual and

collective discussions that I have had with the PBDC Board of Directors, are to be considered my personal comments and in no way officially reflect the position of the Pacific Basin Development Council or its Board.

UNIQUE ISLAND CONCERNS

Much can be said for the fact that Hawaii and the Pacific have really gotten themselves into a "Catch-22" situation. For ten years prior to the birth of PBDC, I served as the Director of the Western Governors' Conference. That organization provided support activities and services for 12 mainland Governors, the Governor of Hawaii, and the three American territorial Governors of American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Marianas. It didn't take very many meetings with the 12 Western Governors to realize that Pacific Basin issues and problems were not part of the interests of the mainland Governors. Issues, such as coal strip mining, oil development, the Federal Land Use Management Act (better known as FLIPMA), energy related land use questions and others, were areas of less significant concern to the "island" Governors.

On the other hand, there is a general perception by many (including

the Mainland Governors, Federal officials, and others) that issues like labor and manpower training, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, Title XX of the Social Security Act, alternative energy planning and development, SSI, (Supplemental Security Income), emergency school aid, air and water quality standards, and mass transit are not issues of major importance in the Pacific. We have used the term "a Paradise" to build a feeling that our areas are trouble-free and that most of the issues as set by the national government as being priorities of the Mainland and are of little significance at our Pacific islands. I maintain that this is one of the central reasons that Federal employees (or elected officials) have often come back from a visit to Saipan, Agana, Pago Pago or any one of a number of areas in the Pacific with a sense of disbelief that is only displaced by an enthusiasm to get a particular program implemented, beefed-up, or supplemented.

"SHOCKED REALIZATION"

This "shocked realization" of the reality of life in the Pacific islands--more specifically, in the American flag territories for our purposes--is nothing new. The peaks and ebbs of Federal assistance can be so charted over the last 25 years, through administrations of appointed Governors, like Skinner, Lowe, Daniel, or Guerrero (Guam); or Phelps, Lowe, Coleman, H. Rex Lee, Aspinwall, or Mockler (American Samoa). We have also seen it through the national administrations of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Carter. It was not too many years ago that the U. S. Congress started making the territories eligible for many Federal programs. Although there have been some benefits, we also find the territories faced with Federal rules and regulations dealing with air quality standards based on the worst possible conditions in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Denver, while Guam continues to fight

to become eligible for the Supplemental Security Income Program and all the territories are fighting to become eligible for Title XX of the Social Security Act.

The real unanswered question, at this point, is what direction the new Reagan Administration will take not only with regard to the American flag territories but the emerging entities of Micronesia as well.

THE ROLE OF PBDC

The major thrust of PBDC's regionalism activities at this point, is to present a realistic, practical, and believable view of the issues and problems in the American Pacific islands. This has been performed in a number of ways. We have almost day-to-day contact with Federal agencies that are interested in the regional activities of PBDC. These include, but are not limited to, the U.S. Departments of Interior, Commerce (and their Economic Development Administration), State, and Energy, as well as Region IX's Federal Regional Council in San Francisco; the offices of Federal agencies in Honolulu; The Federal Executive Board, and its Pacific Outreach Subcommittee.

I stated that we have day-to-day contact with these Federal Entities. It should be made clear that we are a supplement--not a replacement--for the individual, island-specific communications between island governments and the agencies. This is particularly important and a point that I would like to elaborate on. The role of PBDC, as outlined in our Articles of Incorporation and our By-Laws, is very specific. Our very sense of being is to provide regional (as opposed to island-specific) services. A collective group of voices is much louder and, therefore, more effective than the voice of one individual--especially when that voice is some 9,000 miles from Washington, D.C.

Although we might seem to defeat our centralized and common causes by stating that each of our islands is a unique entity, we can at least speak with the combined voices of four Governors to attract attention to our problems. And that is yet another objective of PBDC in its regional role. But it is one objective that we must be very cautious with. For example, at no time do we wish to have four Governors sit down and determine if Governor Coleman of American Samoa really needs an additional 120 feet of dock space or quick freeze machine for the daily fish catch. What we do want to do, however, is to identify the ocean issues, including fisheries, transportation, and the resulting need for additional dock space, are of major significance to the region in our efforts to improve both ocean and economic conditions in the Pacific. After the Governors have determined that an issue like this is indeed a priority, we work with them, their staffs, Federal executive and Congressional folks, and the private sector (who are very important to PBDC's operation). We identify the specific components of the problems, the limitations and pluses of Federal programs, and the experiences of other entities in the area, as well as the needs of the private sector as they attempt to seek markets and investment opportunities. Here we have yet another objective: to provide a neutral forum for identification of those issues that have regional significance and impact and to help our member Governors in attempting to resolve the problems in those areas.

Because of the limited resources and funds available, it becomes necessary to establish priorities and to direct the activities of all concerned toward specific areas. This, in essence, was what was done at the Kuilima Conference held on Oahu in February of 1980. I say "in essence," because there were some problems with the conference results, as any of you who attended are well aware.

Kuilima was a necessary part of the birth and growth of PBDC. It brought together all the players--representatives from the Federal government, the academics, the private sector, island government officials, and--of perhaps unrecognized importance--the media. It provided a forum for issue identification, but, perhaps more significant, it provided an opportunity for the Governors of the American Pacific Islands, individually and collectively, to work together, with each other's staffs and provided a media opportunity to advertise that a new effort was being launched and developed in the Pacific. We should not sell short the positive benefits that were derived from working closely for about a year with the Federal participants in both the planning and execution of the conference.

As a result of the conference, some 154 programs were identified in the areas of fisheries, coastal zone management, telecommunications, ports, transportation, trade, tourism, energy, and municipal services (including basic management and financial infrastructure capacities). It provides food for thought that when all of the programs and estimated costs were added up, the total came to just over \$1.64 billion dollars. It is no wonder that some refer to the final conference report as our "wish book." So we have found yet another objective: to bring together all the players to assist the Governors in determining priorities in both economic and social development and to plan for the actual demonstration and implementation activities.

So far, we have been talking about what regionalism is and what the goals and objectives are. Have we had a chance to actually try anything in the short time that PBDC has been in existence? In fact, we have. The following is a fairly complete list of those activities that we have undertaken:

- . Aquaculture development project
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- . Territorial Private Investment Assistance Corporation, or a regional development bank
- . Regional economic development information system
- . (Jointly authored) Regional energy planning paper for the Pacific
- . Energy Management Partnership Act monitoring
- . Federal agency/department coordination
- . Federalism forum
- . Fisheries development planning
- . Health manpower planning
- . Intergovernmental personnel Agreement
- . Island briefing papers
- . Maritime laws/regulations impact study
- . Negotiated Investment Strategy
- . Nuclear waste issue
- . OTEC implementation study
- . Pacific Business Center (UH) project
- . Establishment of a quick response system
- . Regional cooperation project (with EWC)
- . Regional "other" organizations study
- . Regional planning and training project
- . State Solar Office for the Pacific

I would like to single out three specific projects for further amplification:

1. DOI/DOE Energy Assessment Project
2. Western and Central Pacific Regional Fisheries Development Plan
3. Coastal Zone Management (a hope for the future)

In Coastal Zone Management (CZM), we hope to have our two tier Planning systems in reverse. First, we foresee the establishment of a regional CZM program which would offer the opportunity to view and respond to the needs of the region as a whole, which would also allow each island to specify its own needs within a coherent framework of planning and recommending. This region-first approach recognized that the islands in coastal zone management are facing many, similar problems, issues, and constraints due to their similar geographic base and overlapping natural resources. There is a recognized need to coordinate coastal

zone planning, policies, and programs, to study and implement unified coastal zone policies of the American flag territories and the State of Hawaii.

BUDGET CUTS AFFECT ISLANDS

The question now is what does the future hold? In March 1981, PBDC's Director of Planning and Programs and I accompanied Governor Ariyoshi to the Winter meeting of the National Governors' Association in Washington, D.C. Our major interest was to see what the current perception and reception of the new Administration, the U.S. House, and the now-Republican controlled Senate to the Pacific, its territories, and PBDC would be. Congressman Won Pat (Guam) now chairs the Subcommittee on Insular areas (although the TTPI responsibility is now handled by Congressman Siberling.) The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, formally chaired by Senator Scoop Jackson, is now in the hands of Senator James McClure of Idaho. McClure kept most of Jackson's staff and as they are attuned to the problems, we imagine that McClure will be also.

It is still too early to determine what the impact of the proposed budget cuts will be on the territories, but the islands stand a good chance of being affected in a negative sense more than the States. During this period of self-flagellation where it appears to be patriotic to cut one's self once, the territories are going to be required to bleed from at least two wounds. First, they will be losing the same domestic Federal grants programs, as the States will be losing. Then, they face a fairly good chance of receiving a substantial cut in their base budgets, which is provided through the U.S. Department of Interior. With regards to the domestic grant cuts, it is my personal and professional feeling that the loss or cutback of most of those programs (CZM, EDA, fisheries, Sea Grant, Alternative energy planning and development) will have a more significant and devastating impact on the island governments and on our region than

they will have on land-locked, Mainland states.

For the past several weeks, my staff and I, with the Pacific CZM program managers have been attempting to build a case that the islands are, indeed, special and unique and that they deserve special considerations, programs, and funding. (I remind you of my earlier comments that these are my observations and have not been cleared with the Governors.) In the areas of natural resources, transportation, ocean resource development and management, fisheries development and management, and communications, it is my feeling that the "island specific" approach can be used to justify a special and unique approach by both the Federal government and the private sector in attempting to resolve and develop the economy of the Pacific Basin.

It appears that the Federal executive support of "regionalism" and "regions" is not of high priority. On the other hand, it is almost impossible not to view islands, located in the same body of water, all flying the U.S. flag, as like entities with common problems.

Identified earlier were the activities that resulted in the priority setting of the Governors at the Kulima Conference. The priorities identified by the Office of Territorial and International Affairs of the U.S. Department of the Interior (under the Carter Administration) differed. It was the determination of the former Acting Assistant Secretary Wallace Green that before construction of high-rise hotels, extensive port development, implementation of major trade activities and so on, there was a need to provide some very basic elements that would assure that major investment (of either Federal, territorial, or private dollars) would provide the expected results.

Green's priorities consisted of very basic needs, including: power, inter- and intra-island communications and transportation, an infrastructure that would guarantee both administrative

and fiscal management accountability, and water (both quantity and quality, and the handling of the resulting sewage materials). Between the priorities identified at Kulima by the Governors and those identified by the former Assistant Secretary, there falls a middle ground. Therefore, another of PBDC's objectives is to find that middle ground and to make sure that neither extremes totally influence the work programs of PBDC.

Under former President Carter, a formal start for developing a Federal policy for the territories was announced in his February 14, 1980 Message to Congress. Besides reorganizing the Office of Territorial Affairs, the message made clear the Administration's commitment to the American flag territories. Under the Reagan Administration, it would appear that everything is up in the air. And as of this date, there is no indication as to where this Administration is going to stand on the territorial issue.

There has been some recent movement regarding the TTPI. Former Senator James Buckley, now Under-Secretary for Coordination of Security Assistant Programs of State, has activated the Inter-agency Task Force on Micronesia, which is operating under the U.S. Department of State. It appears clear that the Reagan Administration will want to closely examine the Compact of Free Association. This examination might be accelerated because a report to the U.N. on the status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands was due in May.

The most important and highest priority should be to open up the dialogue to assure that communication between highly placed officials in the new Administration, especially those in the White House, become a reality. That dialogue must formally recognize, on both sides, that there are now developments in the Pacific Territories. The Federal government must understand some of the following points:

- . We have elected Governors who owe a responsibility to their own island constituency, not appointed Governors who are beholden to the Federal system;
- . In each American flag territory, we have a representative and democratic form of government which has a legislative body and a more influential form of judicial involvement than in the past;
- . The Governors of the Pacific have set priorities, are involved in fairly detailed planning and implementation activities, and are speaking, at times, with a regional perspective;
- . There is major interest in the Pacific by the Governor of Hawaii and an equal interest and support from Hawaii's Congressional Delegation;
- . In the past, the U.S. Congress, especially in the House, has been filling a void that has resulted from the lack of a firm commitment--a highly visible commitment--by the Executive Branch relating to the formal position of the future of the territories;
- . The Compact of Free Association is going to provide a different set of issues and problems, and the American flag territories and the Governors of the Pacific can assist in the transition;
- . And, generally, the Pacific Basin community is coming of age, politically, intellectually, and economically.

Those in the Pacific, and I don't restrict this to just the Governors of the American flag territories, it involves all of us, must recognize some of the following:

- . We are facing a more limited, and limiting, budget under the Reagan Administration which demands more accountability, a better and more meaningful delivery of services for the dollar (Federal or otherwise),

and an acceptance of the fact that the time to develop island economies should go hand-in-hand with political growth and development;

- . Potential investors (government and/or private, American or foreign) are going to be hesitant to make any investment until there can be a guarantee by island governments and island private sectors of the delivery of certain services and resources;
- . Government is a joint effort of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches and each element plays a key and significant role in program identification and implementation;
- . Regional and island-specific activities are complementary and by using efforts and experiences of developing countries, as well as mainland states, a more productive "end" can be reached in a shorter period of time;
- . The island governments are in a position or are able to transfer technical assistance based upon their own past experiences and an activity of this type can benefit all concerned;
- . And, cooperative activities with the Federal government, each other, and the private sector have greater potential as tools for both economic advancement.

PLANNED AND CONTROLLED GROWTH

States and territories seek planned and controlled growth consistent with the quality of life objectives. They recognize the interdependent nature of the national governmental mosaic, probably better than it is recognized either at the Federal or local level. They seek a partnership of local, territorial/state, and Federal governments, untied by an overall national policy that will clarify responsibilities at each level of government and assure that within each level there is an internal consistency of purpose and program.

Both sides have to agree to one central and very important theme: regionalism is not separatism. Regionalism is an activity which operates under priorities, goals, and objectives that are jointly developed by all involved. There is an inherent danger that unless this joint responsibility is understood and practiced, we will all be working at cross purposes. That concern, and the activities of PBDC to assure that regionalism does not become confused with separatism, is perhaps the most important product.

The most important first step is to open up dialogue, to assure that

communications between highly placed officials in the new Administration as well as the Congress become a reality. We in PBDC (the Governors, individually and collectively) are working in this. And I ask you to join us in this most important effort. As noted in the Micronesian anthem,

"We are a people of the oceans...
we will work together to make these
islands another promised land."

PBDC is committed to this concept, to bring both the old and new aboard to realize that dream..or that goal..or if you wish...that objective.