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TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Office of the High Commissioner

Saipan, Mariana Islands

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U OF G PROFESSORS AT CONFERENCE

Marianas

Two University of Guam professors, Dr. Marguerite L. Alstrom and Dr. W. Scott Wilson, spoke at the Trust Territory Personnel Administrators' Conference on Saipan this week. Dr. Alstrom, professor of Public Administration, presented a paper on "Education's role in Developing Professional Public Servants." Dr. Wilson spoke on "Cross-Cultural Relations."

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Dr. Alstrom discussed the role a public servant plays in the complex activities of government. "A public administrator sees that the routine work of government is performed... and preserves stability in an ever-changing world. He is trained in organization and management, the artistic process of leading, co-ordinating, and controlling individuals within the framework of organization.

Marshalls

Factors influencing decision-making and imposing responsibilities upon all administrators at all levels are rapid growth of population and the ever-changing nature of international environment--factors which are altering the scope and character of management. "Today's executive in public service must have competence in many disciplines in order to understand the complexities of the external environment in which he operates, and the internal workings of the organization of which he is a part," she added.

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In speaking of cultural relations--American vs Micronesians--Dr. Wilson discussed modern technology, mass production and other aspects of modern life which are gradually permeating the life of Micronesians. An example of cultural difference, he noted, is that Americans and Micronesians do not necessarily have the same "concept" of work. Americans view work as a social obligation and are greatly disturbed by a "sense of guilt," if they do not perform work. Because of this, most Americans would not enjoy a vacation, if they had not done some work as a prelude to "earning" it.

While a key factor to mutual understanding between Americans and Micronesians is to learn each other's cultures, Dr. Wilson said Americans are not as vocal and articulate in Micronesian languages and cultures as most Micronesians who have the advantage of American schooling and learning. He added that the term "going native" has been used in a negative sense in Micronesia and has discouraged many willing Americans from learning Micronesian cultures.

Regarding Americans adjusting to a Micronesian environment, Wilson said it would be difficult for most of them because they are materially rich and have a high standard of living, which is not commonly found in Micronesia. On the other hand, if an American is told that his living quarters are temporary and he can expect something better, he would probably accept the idea because it has a future benefit. Most Americans are future-oriented, he added.

Wilson said Micronesians are used to island life and would not necessarily want to control nature, whereas Americans want to control and subdue nature and create their own environment. Wilson noted, however, that Micronesians are not unresourceful but historically they did develop rudimentary techniques and skills essential to their livelihood.

MORE

Dr. Wilson described Americans as being pragmatic, tending to view things as either right or wrong, making it difficult for them to adjust to reality. Micronesians, he said, are more realistic about life and tend to regard Americans as ridiculous in this respect. Americans may appear selfish, but they will give up material benefits if they feel they are accomplishing something, he added.

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