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Neddog, Joe
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Angoco, Vicente M.
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Manibusan, Pedro A.E.
Blaz, Joaquin G.
Camacho, Jesus S.
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Chalan-Pago-Ordot
Quitugua, Franklin J.
Lujan, Pilar C.
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Guerrero, Betty S.
Untalan, Enrique L.G.
Garrido, Jose M.
Inarajan
San Nicolas, Jose P.
Merrill, Malcolm H., Jr.
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Flores, William A.
Merizo
Barcinas, Jose T.
Mongmong-Toto-Maite
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Santa Rita
Borja, Gregorio M.
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Tamuning
Palomo, Antonio M.
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Ada, Joseph F.
Umatac
Aguon, Tomas T.
Yigo
Calvo, Antonio A.
Blas, Juan G.
Yona
Leon Guerrero, Lorenzo C.
Aguon, Francisco B.

David D.L. Flores
Executive Director

the first

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

of the territory of Guam OCT. 3 1 1969 MORNING STAR

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AN EDITORIAL

Residents Shun Federal Pressure

The very valuable and constructive public hearings, or village meetings, of the First Constitutional Convention of Guam now shift in emphasis from the executive branch of our Territorial government to the legislative and judicial branches.

The first round of meetings, we believe, were quite informative. In village after village, the people of Guam showed an active interest in the workings of their government and in the relationships between its branches. It would appear that most Guamanians want at least a moderately strong executive under no unusual restraints. Like most Americans, they are suspicious of anything remotely resembling a federal stranglehold on local policy and initiative, and it is on this basis that the office of the Government Comptroller has most often been attacked in the villages.

It appears, also, that the Village Commissioner is a popular institution, although several commissioners have pointed out that the office carries little power, since it involves neither the authority to tax nor to spend. The office, unchanged, might turn into one of local

“One Man-One Vote” edict to see to it that each Senator represents about the same number of people as another. This would probably be simple if the election of Senators at large were retained, but the voters last year signified they wanted representation on a district basis.

The fact that the most recent U.S. census of the island, which includes the military bases, where there are few if any voters, must be the criterion for creating districts makes the task Herculean. The spectre of rotten boroughs looms. It may, indeed, be necessary to go back to the voters in another referendum to find the solution.

With regard to the judiciary, there is a great deal of talking and comparing and research to be done.

For one thing, as Guam approaches the long struggle for statehood, it must bear in mind the necessity to create its own court system rather than append the local courts to the Federal District Court here. It would be best, even if in planned stages, a thorough (if small) court system were provided for, in

Ombudsman; at any rate, the Commissioner system appears here to stay.

So, in general, it is manifest that, aside from some particular and specific Guamanian requisites, the people want an active (and preferably Guam-bred) executive with the power to do his job.

This, not surprisingly, is well within the American pattern, based on the principle of division of power among the three branches of government.

Turning, as we now do, to the other two branches of government, the people and the Convention will have less of a clear precedent (as represented by the pattern of the federal government) to go by.

We have, for example, a unicameral Legislature, rather than the usual upper and lower houses on the pattern of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. It is therefore impossible to provide for both geographic and strictly numerical bases for election of the Senators. To impose a second house in the Legislature would be a clumsy and unrealistic move.

which all cases, criminal and civil, would originate and be tried, and in which an appeals court functioned. It would remain for the Federal Court to hear cases involving the federal laws and interstate civil matters, as well as serving as the arena for appeals based on Constitutional grounds.

The terms of judges, and the basis for their selection need careful study and attention. Neither the life appointments of the Federal Bench nor the harum-scarum short-term elective judgeships which have long plagued many states and mainland municipalities would, we think, be of great value here.

Possibly the citizens and the delegates will find an agreeable compromise between the two extremes; one in which the judges are not so attuned to the possible effect of a decision on a future election as to shrink from a stern line but still, in some fashion, responsive to changing times and social needs.

Solutions, of course, will be worked out to these problems. They probably will not be ideal, but they will be an exercise — and we hope a fruitful one — in the democratic process.