

Status voters need citizenship lowdown

Guam is going to decide on its political future. If they don't do this in July, then in November. If not this year, then next year or the year after that.

That's the way it is supposed to be. It's called the exercise of democracy. It is called the end of colonialism.

One of the major hang-ups in making this decision is going to be American citizenship. Is it important? Can it be negotiated? Who among us will leave the island rather than give it up?



**Joe
Murphy**

In recent weeks, on the radio, I've heard some commercials that try to explain away the idea of American citizenship. Three young men in the commercial talk about how the United States has offered the Puerto Ricans citizenship, apparently along with a sort of independence. I'm not so sure. The commercial also said that dual citizenships weren't uncommon.

Having citizenship in the most powerful, richest nation in the world is a big deal. You must remember thousands, actually millions of people all over the world are swimming rivers and paying thousands of dollars to snakeheads to become an American citizen. That passport comes in handy if you are a traveler and you run into trouble.

But is it essential to life, peace and happiness? Of course not. Filipinos have passports. So do Palauans and Micronesians. Some say that no matter what option we choose, we would never have to give up our American citizenship. It is just the new generation that would have single nation passports.

I'm a little skeptical about all this. I would like to see a statement from the Department of State explaining rules and laws for citizenship and for dual citizenship. It may be true that this sort of thing can be negotiated.

The only experience I've ever had with citizenship concerns a few of my grandchildren. My daughter and her husband moved to Canada in the late 1960s. The children were born in Canada, but since the parents were American citizens, that presented a problem which was resolved when the children turned 21. They had to go to the authorities and make a choice, if they wanted to be Canadian or American. They chose American. They could not be citizens of both countries.

In fact, I was very surprised to read a newspaper account of Sir Anthony Hopkins, who has just become a Yank citizen. "He has taken a dual citizenship," his spokeswoman Catherine Olim said. A federal judge in Los Angeles administered the oath of citizenship last week. Apparently Hopkins hasn't given up his British citizenship, or his English title.

I'm sorry, but I still don't believe dual citizenships are all that common, despite what the commercial says, or what Hopkins did.

I just want a full explanation of what was offered the Puerto Ricans and more information about dual citizenship. It seems to me that this kind of information would be essential to the Chamorros if they were to make an intelligent vote.

Just recently Gov. Carl Gutierrez was in Samoa to help celebrate their 100th year under the American flag. The Stars and Stripes was first raised on April 17, 1900 after 20 Samoan chiefs ceded the islands of Tutuila and Aunu'u to the United States.

Reports out of Samoa indicate that the Samoans aren't interested now in any change of status.

One Associated Press story pointed out that, "The people of American Samoa are American Samoans, not Samoan-American. That's Fa'a Samoa, or the Samoan way.

It may be that the residents of American Samoa are better off than their neighbors next door in what used to be called Western Samoa, but now is just plain Samoa.

One thing that impressed me when we were in Apia, in Samoa, was the long lines of Samoans standing in front of the American embassy, trying to get visas to the United States or to American Samoa.

The news story, in talking about the "partnership between American Samoa and the United States," talked about the parades, feasts, celebrations and speeches. Some of the commemorations involved the Navy and Marines.

One of the territorial house members said: "We still have the protection of the U.S. government, although we have the right to control our own affairs." The U.S. Congress has not yet created an Organic Act for Samoa. However, the U.S. Department of Interior allowed residents to draft their own constitution.

The islands have had self-government for the past 25 years, and have had plenty of problems when it comes to trying to balance a budget.

Right now, two tuna-canning factories provide most of the jobs, although they would like Congress to view Samoa as an aquaculture haven for the future, in an effort to diversify the economy.

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