

On My Mind

11/14/08

One has to wonder whether John McCain - or any other presidential candidate - was as organized, as prepared to become president, as President-elect Barack Obama so obviously is. For example, within a week of the election, reports say that his transition team had drawn up a list of 100 possible executive orders that he could use to bring about some immediate change - as he has promised - because legislative and major policy changes would take much longer.

It took research to identify the subjects for those proposed orders; it took legal expertise to word them effectively, it took foresight and planning and strategic awareness to even think of generating such a list, that it might be needed, be useful.

Obama has been careful not to step on President Bush's toes, but he's also made it known that he will change policies re handling of prisoners at Guantanamo, re the place of lobbyists in his administration, re the U.S. role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict....

If ten days can produce all this, just imagine what the rest of the transition period will bring forth!

The focussed, well-organized, absolutely-on-target nature of the process speaks volumes, in my book, and as an indication of things to come, foretells an exhilarating new climate in Washington. Let's hope he doesn't burn out before he even takes office!

Without TV, one would think I'd miss a lot of the excitement and information that Obama's election has brought. But, thanks to the excellent coverage provided, particularly by the *Saipan Tribune*, which managed to publish the full text of both the Obama and McCain speeches immediately after the election and has provided fulsome coverage since - and to random trawling of the web - I don't feel I've missed all that much. Interestingly, Guam's *Pacific Daily News* hasn't come close to equaling the *Trib*'s coverage.

As a member of the media, it does its customers a major disservice; it is depriving the reading public of significant information that will have a major impact on their lives.

Shifting from the sublime (tales of Obama, not the *Trib*!) to the ridiculous, the front page story in Wednesday's *Trib*, "3K hours of outage so far," reports that since the Aggrekko generators have been turned on, the number of outages "has decreased dramatically. Through Oct.24, the island experienced only 44 hours of outages for the month of October."

Granted, that's a major relief and blessing. But let no one forget: **The NORM is NO outages!** That the CUC will get to that point in the foreseeable future does not, sad to say, seem very likely.

Now the legislature seems hung up on the difference between alternate, alternative, and renewable energy in its on-again, off-again effort to generate a viable request for proposal for power generation for the long-suffering residents of Saipan.

The first is easy. To alternate means to take turns, or "every other" - as in "my cleaning lady comes alternate (every other) Thursdays." But the difference between alternative and renewable gets a little fuzzy. "Alternative" used to mean "either one of two." Some use it to mean "any one of several." It has acquired a new meaning when used with "energy" to mean "energy generated in ways that do not deplete natural resources or harm the environment, especially by avoiding the use of fossil and nuclear power." [from the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2nd edition].

The same dictionary defines the noun "renewable" (usually "renewables") as "a source of energy that is not depleted by use, such as water, wind or solar power."

If the intent is to consider nuclear energy as a potential power source for the CNMI, definitions of acceptable proposals should not limit applicants to either "alternative" or "renewable energy" unless the words "or nuclear energy" are added.

And nuclear deserves serious consideration. An item reported in the British newspapers the *Guardian* and the *Observer* on 11/09/08 states, "Nuclear power plants smaller than a garden shed and able to power 20,000 homes will be on sale within five years, say scientists at Los Alamos, the US government laboratory which developed the first atomic bomb.

"The miniature reactors will be factory-sealed, contain no weapons-grade material, have no moving parts and will be nearly impossible to steal because they will be encased in concrete and buried underground. The US government has licensed the technology to Hyperion, a New Mexico-based company which said last week that it has taken its first firm orders and plans to start mass production within five years. 'Our goal is to generate electricity for 10 cents a watt anywhere in the world,' said John Deal, chief executive of Hyperion. 'They will cost approximately \$25m each. For a community with 10,000 households, that is a very affordable \$250 per home.'"

The company plans to produce 4,000 plants between 2013 and 2023. "The first confirmed order came from TES, a Czech infrastructure company. 'They ordered six units and optioned a further 12,' said Deal. The first one, he said, would be installed in Romania. 'We now have a six-year waiting list.'" The same company had offered to work with the CNMI in setting up one or more of its plants here as a demonstration model, but unfortunately for all of us, the offer was never seriously considered.

Short takes:

The pre-bid conference regarding the Request for Proposal for putting up

multi-plex homestead housing units in Koblerville and Capitol Hill has been postponed until further notice. The idea was certainly intriguing - and long overdue, what with the amount of available public land shrinking every year. What was interesting was the lack of public discussion of the idea - no articles, no letters, no editorials. Phone calls to ascertain the reason for the postponement were not returned as of this writing.

*

Kudos to the House and Senate for forming, finally, a Task Force on the about-to-be implemented federal immigration law. Let us hope that the federal officials involved will provide means and opportunity for Task Force members to take the active role in development of the implementing rules and regulations that had been originally envisioned, and which the governor has refused to accept.

*

Lots of pictures of the governor in the news lately - what with laying wreaths on Veterans' Day, meeting with various visiting groups, etc. Other than officers in full uniform, the only one wearing a tie and jacket is the CNMI governor. Loyally, sort of, the lieutenant governor wears a tie.....Everyone else? Short sleeves, tropical prints.

*

The coconut wireless offered a wild and ugly rumor the other day: that the contract for the deputy secretary of public health's contract was not renewed - despite her many significant contributions - in a deliberate effort by the governor to spite the lieutenant governor by undercutting the operation of DPH, of which the lt. gov's brother is secretary.

*

Question of the week: who is Paul Amoy? He's been running distasteful ads in the local paper soliciting evidence of "inappropriate conduct" by clergy over the past 40 years, no less. What's going on here? Is he just a hungry lawyer, looking for new clients? Or? Only an e-mail address is provided as contact point.

*

On a brighter note: Sure hope Laura Bush's pillow talk wins out in the contest with vice-president Dick Cheney about whether the Marianas National Marine Monument declaration should go ahead. Cheney apparently argues that the Monument would impede economic development, when, in fact, the opposite is true.

*

Last but not least, belated kudos to Benjie Ladrangan at Kagman High School who is teaching his students basic electronics - sufficiently so that the students were able to take on repair of the school's wireless network system, saving the school considerable money in the process. Now if more schools taught those and related skills, think of the dollars PSS could save - not to mention the skills the students would acquire for use at home or on the job.....