

## **Introductory Remarks**

**THE HONORABLE FRANK BLAS**

*Lieutenant Governor of Guam*

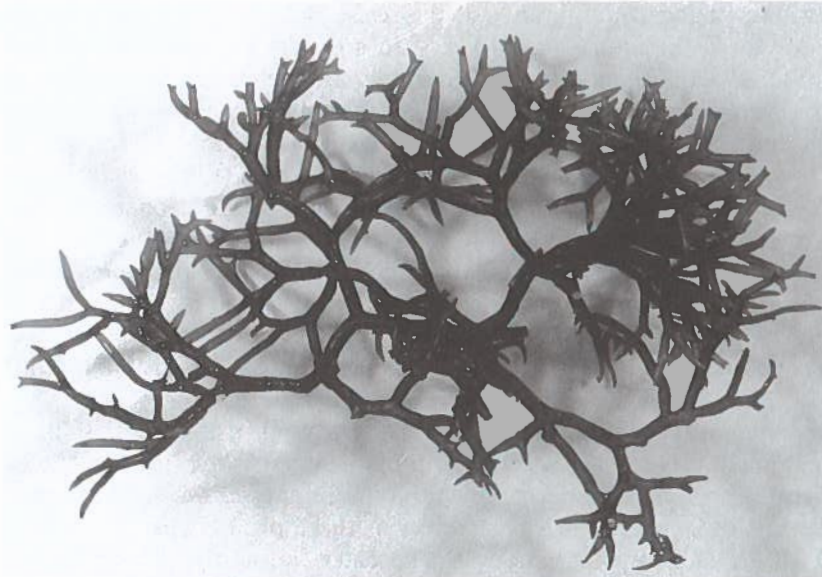
Archbishop Apuron, Dr. Cruz, Mr. Camacho, distinguished panelists, distinguished visitors and friends from Guam: On behalf of the Governor and the people of Guam I would like to welcome you to this very important and vital conference. I add my kudos to the ones that have been expressed already to Dr. E. Cruz and his assistant Aurora Cabanero for coordinating the conference, and I congratulate them for taking a leading role in this very important issue. Each of you today is here to help us solve a mystery, a mystery as puzzling as anything Sherlock Holmes has ever had to solve, a mystery which we could call "The Case of the Toxic Seaweed". While perhaps none of us here is a Sherlock Holmes, I want you to know that I'm very impressed by the level of expertise, the amount of knowledge, and the vast experience that the assembled panel brings to this conference. You will bring your collective wisdom to bear on this mystery as we attempt to solve this riddle. Many theories have been proposed, perhaps many more may yet be presented. Some of these theories may prove to be false leads but others may lead to the path of a solution.

Is the cause of the toxic seaweed natural or artificial? Has the very nature of our waters changed the bounty of the sea, a bounty which has sustained the people of Guam for thousands of years, to a deadly substance which threatens our very lives? Could the pollution caused by modern living be to blame? Could it all be some horrible accident of contamination, perhaps? The questions are certainly many, the answers are perhaps few. But I cannot understate the importance of these answers for indeed the ocean has been a life-sustaining blessing for those of us living here on Guam. Our ancestors lived as one with the ocean and have passed that tradition on to our people. If there is something wrong, if our ocean needs help to continue to be a bountiful blessing, then please give direction as to how we may provide that help. That is why we are here today. That is why you are here today. And I have no doubt that with the grace of God the minds assembled here today will find the answer and end this threat to our people.

I'm often asked why I chose to immerse myself in the business of government, my answer: because I want to help my people. As members of the medical and scientific community, perhaps you have been asked the same question and provided a similar answer. Why are you in these professions? To help people. We are all grateful for that. There is no greater calling than the calling to help our people, to protect our people, to save our people. And, indeed, not just our people for perhaps the findings of this conference may help people throughout

the world just as research into Guam's unique neurologic diseases, Lytigo and Bodig, which Dr. Steele is very involved in, has done.

And so, on behalf of the Governor and the grateful people of Guam, I thank each and every one of you in advance for a job well done. Thank you very much and may God bless you.



Frontispiece: *Gracilaria tsudai* implicated in Guam seaweed poisonings. Photo R. Haddock.