

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY JOHN A. CARVER, JR., BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JUNE 8, 1961.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome very much your invitation to discuss with you in this informal way the impressions I gained from a recent trip to the several territories in the Pacific area.

In addition to the members from the Interior Department and Trust Territory staffs, our party included two other distinguished persons. Mr. Jonathan Bingham, United States Representative to the United Nations Trusteeship Council, assures us that this experience added immeasurably to the background he will need for the Council session which is even now in progress. So far as we know, Mr. Bingham is the first incumbent of his present post ever to have visited the Trust Territory. But I want to express our particular thanks to this Committee for its very valuable service in making available to us the great reservoir of experience represented in Dr. John Taylor, consultant on your staff. Not only did he render valuable assistance in familiarizing us with the background of complex and strange situations, but as you are undoubtedly aware, an introduction by Jack Taylor in any of the islands puts you many strides ahead in securing the confidence of local residents. I do not exaggerate a bit when I say that his presence nearly doubled the mileage we might otherwise have gotten out of the trip. It is a fine tribute to this committee that it has Dr. Taylor on its staff and that it selected him for this assignment.

As you know, the purpose of this trip was twofold: to participate in the inauguration of two new Governors in Guam and American Samoa, and to make an inspection tour through some of the islands of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. We spent approximately three days in Guam and American Samoa, but not more than one day at any location within the Trust Territory. This is admittedly an insufficient period to permit any profound evaluation of the current status of our efforts in these areas. However, I found the experience a tremendously interesting one and feel that by dint of intensive discussion and observation we gained a great deal of insight into the nature of our problems in those areas.

I must confess at the outset that my over-all impression of conditions in these territories is not an entirely happy one. Although much has been done to raise the standards of health, welfare, education and economic activity, the task which still remains is almost staggering in its variety and sheer volume.

With the exception of Guam, the root problem in this whole area is the absence of any sound economic base for self-development. The Trust Territory, for a wide variety of reasons which will bear careful scrutiny, is still depending upon a subsistence economy with copra as the only cash crop. American Samoa, on the other hand, is still languishing in the trough of depression which followed the close-out of military installations in the territory. While some industry has been established in American Samoa, it has not been adequate to fill the vacuum which resulted from the elimination of the Navy payroll.

By contrast, of course, Guam enjoys several economic advantages. The operations of our armed forces create both civilian employment and a higher level of spending by military personnel and their dependents. Private business enterprise appears to be operating at a relatively high level. This provides a revenue base by which Guam has been able to achieve substantially higher standards than the other areas in terms of schools, hospitals, etc.

I am particularly concerned over the situation in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. This is an area where our performance is subject to international scrutiny to a degree which we have not previously experienced. Our relations with the United Nations and our reputation in the world community may very well turn on the degree to which we are able to improve the economic and educational standards of the area and how well we prepare the Micronesian population for an increased measure of self-government. With this challenge in mind it was most discouraging to discover that we are able to maintain only one high school in the entire territory of 3 million square miles with a capacity of 135 students out of a total population in excess of 75 thousand. I would most certainly hope that we would be able in the immediate future to establish other secondary education facilities in the territory to the end that no student graduating from intermediate schools will be denied the opportunity of continuing his or her education.

One of the major deterrents to accelerated economic development in the Trust Territory is the inadequacy of transport facilities to serve this vast expanse of the Western Pacific. For lack of landing facilities at two of the major administrative headquarters, it has been necessary to use amphibious aircraft of limited capacity, expensive to maintain, and inefficient to operate. Surface transport is similarly limited. It is very difficult to schedule trade with the outer islands with the result that incentive for development of cash industry of an agricultural nature is lacking. Notwithstanding these rather discouraging impressions, however, we found the Micronesian leaders to be extremely friendly and dedicated to the institutions which our administration is trying to develop in the territory. The inevitable conflict between old institutions and new social and political concepts is being bridged with surprisingly little acrimony.

There have been many barriers to sound and free development of political and economic relations with the Trust Territory residents. Unsatisfied land claims, uncertainties with regard to Japanese war claims and experiences with nuclear testing in the territory may still be cited as sources of irritation. Before, during, and after our visit to the territory, many discussions were held on these issues. I am sincerely hopeful that actions are underway or in concrete planning stages which will lay these ghosts to rest within a reasonable period of time.

In my judgment conditions in American Samoa would fall some place in between those existing in Guam and those described above for the Trust Territory. Apparently at one time we had an adequate plant and could provide adequate services in that territory. Subsequently, however, world standards have raised and some of our original plant has worn out. Thus there is a gap between what exists and a minimum desirable standard as to power production, education, sanitation and transport facilities, including highways.

I do not regard any of these conditions as hopeless, or even discouraging beyond a point of correction at a reasonably early date. The men who have recently been designated as High Commissioner of the Trust Territory and the Governor of American Samoa are persons of a high order of competence dedicated to and experienced in the business of public service. I am confident, indeed certain, that they will act on two essential fronts to meet the problems which I observed. First, they must assess these conditions in coldly realistic terms and determine how much of the slack can be absorbed through local effort; and second, they must find ways and incentives which will stimulate local population to improve their situation through individual and community effort. I must confess, however, that even with such effort it would seem impossible to accomplish what must be accomplished in these areas without a substantially increased level of Federal effort and subsidization. I do not foresee any blanket request for general increases of appropriations but concrete proposals for specific projects which can be defended on their own merits as being in the best interest of both the territorial residents and the United States as a whole.

In summary, I would like to say that the people, the social institutions and the geography of the Western Pacific were most fascinating to me. If my recent trip does nothing else it has already given me a deep appreciation of the task faced by the Governors of these areas. You may be sure that I intend to give them every possible support I can, and I am confident that they may rely upon this Committee for sympathetic consideration of steps which they recommend as necessary to improve our position and reputation in these remote areas of the world.

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