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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation 23376

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DATE: June 1, 1962

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SUBJECT: Pacific Islands

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EXCISE

Lord Hood, Minister, British Embassy
Ambassador Beale, Australian Embassy

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Campbell, Second Secretary, Australian Embassy
Ambassador Laking, New Zealand Embassy
Mr. Miller, Counselor, New Zealand Embassy

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The Secretary
Mr. Wallner, Deputy Assistant Secretary, IO
Mr. Rice, Deputy Assistant Secretary, FE
Mr. Bell, Director, Office of Southwest Pacific Affairs

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The Secretary opened the meeting by recalling that the question of the future of the Pacific Islands had been raised at the ANZUS meeting. He observed that the United Nations, over the next few years, would likely have a decreasing number of colonial problems to deal with and might well tend to concentrate increasingly on the Pacific Islands. He suggested that solutions would be easier to reach if problems were taken up early rather than left to drift. The Secretary asked Ambassador Beale if he would care to comment.

Ambassador Beale said

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Ambassador Laking

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The Secretary emphasized the importance of the free world maintaining control over the vast reaches of the Pacific. At the same time, he said, we felt it was necessary to obtain the consent of the indigenous populations and to obtain a degree of external consent for arrangements which might be developed. We were following such a policy with respect to our territories, including our Trust Territory. He suggested that one device that might be considered was association of the sort enjoyed by Puerto Rico, with its Commonwealth status.

The Secretary added it might be well, in view of the broad division of responsibility in the Pacific area, to have a look at the question of a change of flag. He said in this respect he was not thinking of any "swapping" of islands but rather the matter of possible regional associations. He thought we also should examine the areas where it appeared possible independent states might come into being and consider these areas separately. He suggested that

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it might be useful to consider the basic question of whether it was desirable to put small islands together into regional federations--whether we really could create strength by uniting weaknesses.

Lord Hood said

B1, A3

The Secretary said that he believed the problem should be approached with political imagination and that we should consider a wide range of ideas. He felt that certainly one important matter that must be studied would be the improvement of the economic viability of the islands. In this respect he suggested a special effort be made to determine how the most recent and expected developments in science and technology could be applied over the next decade to practical policy. He referred specifically to such developments as the desalinization of sea water and recent scientific advancements with respect to transport, power and fuel.

The New Zealand Ambassador observed that

B1, A3

During a discussion of the question of French participation in the group, the New Zealand Ambassador said

B1, A3

The Secretary expressed the view that exclusion of the French might very well cause trouble in both this and other contexts. He pointed out that the French had gone a long way in consulting the wishes of the people of their area in the South Pacific. He said that he felt it would be very difficult to give really serious consideration to basic problems without taking the French into account. If there is to be an empty chair, the French should be allowed to elect to make it empty. The New Zealand Ambassador

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It was pointed out that the UK has a condominium with the French in the Pacific. The Secretary said that he felt that it would not be desirable to make a decision regarding French participation at this time, nor would it be desirable to set a date in the future at which such a decision would be taken. He would rather think further about this aspect. In the meantime, no formal working group should be set up.

B1, A3

The New Zealand Ambassador suggested the next step would be

B1, A3

The Secretary said that the U. S. would be agreeable to such procedure but that he felt we should not establish a formal working group at this time. It was agreed that there would be an exchange and discussion by junior officers but that no working group would be formed for the time being. Ambassador Beale suggested that

B1, A3

It was agreed that in answer to press inquiries all participants would state that this meeting was a follow-up on the Secretary's visit to Australia and New Zealand and that no mention would be made of the Pacific Islands to the press.

After the departure of his callers, the Secretary observed to the staff members remaining behind that

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