



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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April 13, 1966

Dear Joe:

Your letter of February 26 and the enclosed staff papers were received in timely fashion, at which time I also learned that the Office of Territories had already undertaken a detailed analysis of their content. I understand that meetings have been held at staff level and that a number of issues are being identified for policy resolution, although I am not fully current as to the trend of their discussions.

In the meantime, however, I have been reviewing in my mind some of our recent discussions in the light of the drafts you have submitted. I must confess that, through all of these considerations, I have had a most uncomfortable feeling of unreality about some of the proposals advanced to improve our posture in the international sphere, more specifically in the United Nations. In essence, our concern over what would satisfy the Committee of 24, problems with domestic legislation, and related procedural questions seem to me to have pushed into the background some fundamental substantive questions, especially the readiness of some of the areas for full self-government.

This issue has no serious relevance insofar as Guam and the Virgin Islands are concerned. The people of those territories are citizens of the United States who have exercised the full power of local legislative jurisdiction for more than a decade and a half. Each has had at least a full generation's experience with mainland education standards and now maintains a territorial college. Although deprived of certain citizenship rights (popular election of governors, representation in Congress, and participation in national elections), we have no doubt of their competence to assume these prerogatives. Once these incidents of citizenship are extended by national legislation, we trust and assume that the United States will take the initiative to declare a termination of United Nations jurisdiction.

This leaves Samoa and The Trust Territory as areas which require the most concentrated consideration. On the basis of our several discussions, I understand that you believe that our objectives will be served only by according to these territories in the reasonably

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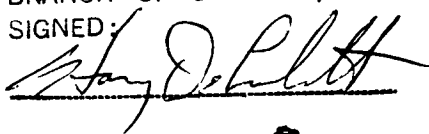
immediate future substantially the same degree of local self-government and participation in national political affairs as is ultimately contemplated for Guam and the Virgin Islands.

Candor requires me to face this issue squarely by expressing the view that neither of these two areas is ready to assume such responsibilities. I am convinced that any attempt to accord such status, political feasibility within our own governmental structure apart, would result in chaos and a great disservice both to the communities involved and to the United States posture as the trustee of their welfare. To be even more blunt about it, I would regard any such proposal at this point in time as highly unrealistic. It would be designed to serve our national purpose heedless of local consequences, and I think this cannot yield a sound result.

I do not propose here to specify the reasons for the above conclusion, beyond stating that neither community has enjoyed educational opportunities sufficient to develop competent native leadership on the scale needed for local self-government, and neither has an economic base adequate to support needed public services without substantial Federal grants. A primitive cultural heritage is still so strong that the hidden force of tribal sovereignty colors all concepts of land ownership, income distribution and political authority. In short, the people have neither the political experience nor the tradition of democracy required to assume the full array of governmental responsibilities inherent in our constitutional system.

Areas of colonial Africa and Asia which have taken the reins of their own affairs through the process of complete independence or lesser forms of autonomy are not, in my opinion, a precedent for us. As I see it, there existed in each of these areas an intellectual elite with a background of European (or American) education. There was offered at least the promise of governmental competence and stability. They were rich in resource potential and therefore not dependent on outside grants for governmental operations. But above all, the European powers were severing connections with their former colonies. Belgium could walk away from the Congo and bear no responsibility for what might follow--and did. That is not our intention with respect to Samoa and Micronesia. We must live with and assume the burden of what we create. For my own part, I cannot envision a successful self-government experience in either area, if "self-government" is defined to mean that which is necessary to UN agreement to removal of the "non-self-governing" label. I reject the cynicism which would underlie any plan to extend self-government in form but not in fact.

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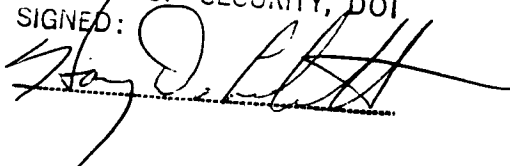
As previously indicated, these are personal convictions. It may be that our respective staff representatives will reach a more optimistic conclusion, but I will be highly suspicious of their methodology if they do. In any event, my reservations are so deeply rooted that some fundamental reconsideration of realistic alternatives seems essential. I shall be interested in your reaction to these admittedly blunt conclusions.


Sincerely yours,


John A. Carver, Jr.
Under Secretary

Hon. Joseph J. Sisco
Assistant Secretary of State for
International Organization Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D. C.

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