

03  
05

Hughes

If we are satisfied by the U.S. Interior (with some support March 23, 1967 Johnson in NSC) says this is politically unrealistic and that the most we can expect Congress to agree to is a territorial status similar to that of ~~Guam and (Civil Rights (U.S. Justice) and State have been unable to get together at the staff level.~~

Summary: State-Interior-Defense meeting on political future of the Trust Territory

Interior has responded to pressure from State, Defense, the Bureau and the Micronesian Legislature and has developed a proposal to ask Congress (State, Interior, Defense and the NSC are meeting on political future of the Trust Territory next week, on April 3, 4 and 5th (with no firm time set yet). Participation is to be strictly limited to the Lane-Huttenbach level. The summit approach has been selected as a means of overcoming irreconcilable differences in staff positions. NSC are bringing this to your attention because they might surprise and "revolve" the political and financial quick follow-on response action. If this happens, we suspect that State and Interior will want to contact you or the Director, rather than going through the staff. We have not been invited to participate in although we have some institutional bias against the most likely outcome, a recommendation for a commission to recommend future status.

Background of the problem: trying to make executive branch decisions with a committee (Huttenbach concurs in this). The Interior proposal would ~~our trusteeship in Micronesia dates back to 1947. One of two such trusteeships still in force. The other is Australia's trusteeship over eastern New Guinea. Little was done by the U.S. in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands until 1962 when the Kennedy administration focused on problems there through a task force headed by free Anthony Salinas. Salinas' report is acceptable. The subject of a summit meeting is that the participants will settle on the procedural alternatives (i.e. the Salinas report recommended an immediate start on efforts to stage a plebiscite in the Territory. Little has been done on this since 1962, however. State and Defense have been pushing Interior for action on a plebiscite as early as 1968. Interior has resisted on the grounds that they were not quite ready. We are convinced that Interior's undefined readiness day will never come and have joined State and Defense in urging an early plebiscite and included political future of the Territory in our list of 1969 priorities for a full examination of the revised proposal. We must at least insure that the basic problem, there is no completely acceptable next step. The U.S. requires that the next status of the Territory be full political integration (presumably annexation to Hawaii), free association (such as Puerto Rico's commonwealth status) or independence. Independence is clearly not an alternative which the U.S. can accept for security reasons. Integration into Hawaii has been dismissed by both State and Interior as impractical. Something like free association is the probable solution. State insists that this must be a full immediate commitment to something like commonwealth status~~

If we are to satisfy the U.S. Interior (with some support from Clark Johnson in NSC) says this is politically unrealistic and that the next we can expect Congress to agree to is a territorial status similar to that of Guam and the Virgin Islands. Interior and State have been unable to get together at the staff level.

Recent Action

Interior has responded to pressure from State, Defense, the Bureau and the Hawaiian Legislature and has developed a proposal to ask Congress to establish a 10-man non-party commission (with 3 from the executive branch, 3 from Congress, and 4 from the Hawaiian Legislature). They sent this proposal to State for comment but without receiving a reply sent it to us as a draft bill. The meeting next week is in response to the National League of State. Defense and NSC have been invited. State will make a counter proposal for a concurrent resolution establishing July 4, 1959, as the latest possible date for a plebiscite and calling for a convention and commission with eight from the Congress, and eight members plus a chairman to be appointed by the President. This commission would report to the Congress and the President not later than June 30, 1958.

We are generally opposed to trying to make sensitive branch decisions with a commission (Johnson concurs in this). The Interior proposal would have us do just that. The State proposal would use the Commission as mediating agent for a free association alternative.

Interior could probably agree with State on the commission's makeup. The problem will come in accepting State's assumption that a full free association alternative is acceptable. The danger of a summit meeting is that the participants will settle on the procedural alternatives (i.e. number of people on the commission) and leave the substantive disagreements unresolved. The State briefing paper for the meeting includes, we believe, potential for just such an error.

Recommendation

We recommend that if the Bureau is called on this for fast clearance action that we insist on the opportunity for a full examination of the revised proposal. We must at least insure that the basic problem, what we mean by "free association", has been solved.

We should wait until Interior has sent over the requested issue paper (due April 1) examining the possible alternatives for political future of the Territory. We believe, for example, that the alternative of integration into Hawaii has not been adequately examined previously. Finally, we should reserve the right to object to a statutory commission and urge an executive order type of study group instead.

REPRODUCED FROM HOLDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES