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Mr. McKittrick

January 23, 1969

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Political future - Trust Territory

You asked for a briefing paper. The following is from a conversation with Mrs. Van Cleve.

Last year the Senate passed a political future bill, providing for a Commission to study the problem and make recommendations. This bill died in the House Committee. Rutz believes that the main problem with Chairman Aspinall, who does not see much virtue in a Commission for this purpose.

Mrs. Van Cleve also reports that Aspinall stressed two major, immediate Interior problems in a recent meeting with Secretary-designate Hickel. These concerned Alaska native land claims and the political future of the Trust Territory.

Looking ahead to the 91st Congress, both Mrs. Van Cleve and Aspinall believe that there probably is not enough time left for a Commission approach.

Mrs. Van Cleve is in an uncertain position at this point and has no idea whether she will remain on the job or not, but she does have some ideas regarding a next step. This would involve a statement signed by the President that would include the following:

- (1) The U.S. would welcome political association with the Trust Territory.
- (2) The President has asked Interior, DOD, and State to send up legislation to formalize the association.
- (3) The legislation would provide for a plebiscite.
- (4) The association should, in her view, take a form similar to that of the present situation in Guam, i.e., Presidential-appointed Governor. (This is based on a general feeling that the Micronesians are not prepared for a relatively independent form of government, such as Guam would have in 2 years.

One of the major problems with the above approach is that the U.N. has insisted on an option more like the status of Puerto Rico. State can be expected to reflect this view.

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Mrs. Van Cleve states two reasons for copying the current Guam pattern:

- (1) Limited experience at self-government.
- (2) Pressing for a greater degree of independence would be too much for either Committee. (She notes that it was not easy to get the Guam and Virgin Islands elective-Governor bills passed by the Committee.)