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November 2, 1973

MEMORANDUM

FOR THE

MARIANAS CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS FILE

I met with Senator J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana today briefly to review the current status of the negotiations between the United States and the Marianas. Senator Johnston is the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Territories and Insular Affairs. Senator Johnston deferred the convening of an hearing of which he was the presiding officer for approximately 15-20 minutes to enable us to have a brief discussion. Present also was Jack Weiss, the Senator's legislative assistant, who formerly worked for this law firm as a summer associate and has recently been designated by Senator Johnston as his staff man in charge of Micronesia.

Senator Johnston was very amicable and seemed quite knowledgeable about the negotiations generally. Mr. Wilson had visited with Mr. Weiss yesterday on the subject of the Joint Committee negotiations and met with Senator Johnston for a few minutes. The Senator had not read the background memorandum but Mr. Weiss had done so and stated that it was a useful document.

The discussion was a very hurried one and I tried to touch briefly on the outstanding issues in the areas of political status, economic support and military land proposals. The following transpired:

- (1) On the subject of political status, Senator Johnston appears to be not only intelligent enough to understand what we are trying to do but reasonably receptive to efforts to develop a new status which seems appropriate for the Marianas. He recognized that the term "commonwealth" really is most ambiguous and can cover a variety of different status arrangements. I explained to him generally the interest of the client in ensuring its rights to maximum self-government over internal affairs and the fact that we were trying to create a status which would, admittedly, be very different from that which prevails in Guam, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

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He was not at all troubled by the fact that the status we have in mind is different from other status arrangements but he obviously is going to look closely to see that the components of the plan are constitutional, practical and fair to all the people involved.

- (2) On the subject of financial support, I gave Senator Johnston some idea of the amount of money involved. He basically stated that the only U.S. interests that he could identify were (i) the defense needs of the United States and (ii) the amount of money involved. I spoke to him briefly about the interest in the multi-year commitment for financial support. He seemed very receptive to a multi-year authorization but seemed to contemplate annual appropriations. He stated that he was insisting on annual authorizations and appropriations with respect to the Trust Territory, primarily because he thinks that the TTPI has not received enough attention from Congress. He suggested that this matter and financial commitments would necessarily be treated in the formal Status Agreement and that it was part of the entire package. He understood the arguments which I hurriedly summarized regarding the need for multi-year planning and the extent to which annual budgetary review by the Interior Department and OMB as well as Congress was somewhat incompatible with the desires of the Marianas for meaningful self-government. When I mentioned the figure of \$15 to \$25 million a year for support, he did not exhibit any surprise or otherwise indicate that this sum seemed unreasonably large for so few people.
- (3) On the subject of military lands, I believe from this conversation and from my subsequent meeting with Mr. Weiss that Senator Johnston will generally support any assessment which he receives from the Defense Department regarding the extent of the military's needs in the Marianas. He was aware of the fact that only 700-800 people lived on Tinian and seem prepared to conclude from this that it might be entirely appropriate for the United States to take over the entire island. I indicated that there were several outstanding issues in this area but did not elicit very much response from him.

Generally, Senator Johnston seemed pleased that I was not presently asking him to do anything and asked that I keep him and Mr. Weiss informed of the progress of our negotiations. In response to my request he said that he had no objection to my circulation of the Marianas background memorandum to the other members of the Senate Subcommittee.

Howard P. Willens