

Copy of letter to the Secretary of the Interior, referred to in first paragraph, not in general file. Miss Conway may have.



THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 5, 1946



Dear Mr. President:

On October 20 you sent a memorandum to the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior and State with reference to the administration of the Pacific Islands. On December 6 I sent you a copy of a letter I wrote to the Secretary of the Interior expressing the opinion that for the present action should not be taken in this matter. The Secretary of the Interior disagrees with my views and requests that the sub-committee you named be summoned to draft a report for submission to you on or before February 1st. x6

I cannot do this, first because Secretary Patterson is out of the country this week, and next week I have to leave for the United Nations Assembly meeting in London.

I do not wish my absence to deny to Secretary Ickes his request for prompt action. If you agree that action must be had promptly, Under Secretary Acheson will call a meeting as soon as Secretary Patterson returns. Or, if you do not think this advisable, you can withdraw my name from the committee and advise the other three Secretaries, War, Navy and Interior, to report to you.

In case you should follow the latter course, here are my views:

We occupy the islands just as we occupy other territory in Europe and in the Pacific, by military occupation. In the Pacific MacArthur as Supreme Commander has control of territory taken from the Japanese. Under the position you took at Potsdam there can be no final settlement as to the disposition of enemy territory until there is a peace conference. Pending the peace conference, you can instruct MacArthur to provide any kind of occupation for islands that you determine wise. However, in Germany we have had great

difficulties

The President,

The White House.

difficulties where we have divided jurisdiction and it is my opinion that the military commander in charge of any territory must have authority concentrated in him.

Whenever we have a peace conference and the state of the Pacific Islands is determined it would then be timely to determine the character of the occupation, whether military, civilian or whether it would be shared by military and civil authorities.

The question of bases affects the problem in this way: On some island where we assume complete control there may be a small population and you may determine to maintain a military or naval base. In such case the decision will have to be made as to whether the population is large enough to justify two Departments of the Government operating, or whether, in as much as the Army or Navy has to be there, they should not assume the responsibility of administration for the small population. On another island where there will be no military base the decision might be different.

In other words, my thoughts are (1) that if you desire to introduce civil administration prior to a peace conference during the period of military occupation, it should be done only after consultation with the Supreme Commander and whatever Department is placed on the Island should report through the Supreme Commander; and (2) that as to the administration which will follow the decisions at a peace conference, consideration should be given to whether or not the Army and Navy, because of military installations on some islands, and because the population is not large, should be placed in charge, rather than to have two Departments operating where there are few people.

For the reasons above given I do not see the necessity for immediate decision. However, the Secretary of the Interior is earnestly of the opinion that it is urgent. If the matter is not disposed of before my return, I shall be glad to discuss it with my colleagues. If, on the other hand, it is disposed of, whatever decision is reached will be entirely satisfactory to me.



Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James H. Byrnes".