

Trust Territory Headquarters  
Saipan, Mariana Islands

96950

July 5, 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson  
The White House  
Washington D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I have just resigned my position as the Director of Education of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. I was first appointed to this job in 1951 and began my work under the inspired and idealistic leadership of Senator Elbert Thomas. Those of us who came out here were determined to make this one Trusteeship of the United States an example to the world of the progressive and enlightened administration of our democratic country. We have succeeded in some areas and in some we have not. Up until last year we were handicapped by a very small budget and frequently we would be impelled to ask the question: "Why is so much money given to countries which are not under American administration and such a pittance to this area?"

I doubt, however, if those of us who worked in the Dept. of Education were as discouraged or as pessimistic as some. Educators - or at least those who love their work, come to look for rewards other than purely monetary ones. These we found here. The Micronesians were eager for what we had to offer. They knew how essential it was that their young people become educated in order that they achieve a place in the modern world. In spite of difficulties and deprivations it is with some pride that I can tell you that Micronesians are becoming close to self-government and that every member of the Council of Micronesia - the soon-to-be legislative body of Trust Territory - is a product of the last 13 years of administration of Trust Territory under the Department of Interior. During that time there have been four different High Commissioners, but only one Director of Education. Two of these High Commissioners were Republicans committed to a "cheap" administration, or to speak in terms of years, 8 of the 13 years were years of deliberate cutting down and deprivation. In education this came particularly hard, since the population increased and education grows by what it feeds upon.

In 1960, since I have always been a dedicated and contributing member of the Democratic Party and since I felt I was well qualified by experience and training, I made application to President Kennedy and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udell, for the position of High Commissioner. I was encouraged to do this by Democrats working in Trust Territory and helped by such people as Senator Eagle, Senator Estes Kefauver and Senator Hubert Humphrey. My candidacy was not successful which didn't upset me too much as I realized that it would have been no bed of roses! However, at that time I received a letter from Mr. John Carver, the Assistant Secretary of Interior, asking me to remain in my position as Director of Education and give Mr. M.W. Goding, the newly appointed High Commissioner, all the help he would need. This I have done although I soon learned that Mr. Carver had not meant what he wrote. On his first visit to Guam in 1961 he told me I was a "troublemaker." This staggered me - not the appellation (I am sure to the John Carvers of this world

I am) but the dishonesty of his approach.

Since that time Mr. Carver has tried to get rid of me by various means. I understand from Mr. Goding, the High Commissioner, that on his various visits to Washington, Carver's inevitable question has been: "Have you got rid of Gibson yet?" When you were Vice President after one particularly flagrant example of this in-fighting, I wrote to you and you were kind enough to encourage me indicating at that stage in the game, you too were not without your frustrations and that as Democrats we should continue to serve our country.

The climax came last week and if you will read my enclosed remarks to Mrs. Van Cleave, now Director of the Office of Territories in her briefing session here last week, you will see how Carver finally "got rid of Gibson." I do not need to tell you the impact which my remarks had on the group. If you wish you can ask both High Commissioner Goding, and Mrs. Van Cleave. They are unaware of the reaction which has come from my colleagues throughout the whole of Trust Territory, whose first intimation was the news dispatched throughout the entire Territory within an hour or so that High Commissioner Goding had accepted the resignation of Robert E. Gibson, Director of Education. I have received many letters and dispatches the gist of which is: "How could this happen?" These communications are from Americans. You will be interested, I know, in view of the image which our country presents to the rest of the world, of the reactions of the Micronesians. They are shocked. "How can Americans do things like this," they ask, "and yet always talk to us about individual rights and freedom?" Those of them who are well educated come to me and say: "It's easy to see how you get ahead with this Administration. Do exactly what they say and never question anything."

Mr. President, I know a great deal about the Trust Territory and its people, and while I shall no longer be here to help them, I would ask one favor of you. When you are elected as President next November, I hope you will appoint as Secretary of Interior, some man of the caliber of Harold Ickes. I hope that the next High Commissioner of Trust Territory will be given the kind of autonomy to administer these islands which Commissioner Elbert Thomas had and not be a hamstrung puppet and a figurehead as has Mr. Goding. The person chosen should be an inspiring leader backed up by a capable administrator as Deputy High Commissioner. The Micronesians would respect this kind of man, and, I suspect America would get the kind of approval and cooperation which is her due and we could present to the entire world a picture which would cause men to say: "America knows how best to lead the under developed countries and their peoples to independence and strength."

I wish I could sit down and talk to you about these things. I am leaving here July 13 and will be in Missouri at my mother's farm after the first of August, where you may address me

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Yours sincerely,

Robert E. Gibson

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