

United States Department of the Interior

Office of Territories  
(Bureau or Office)

SUGGESTED MATERIALS FOR PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES

1. Type of Material: Statement of remarks.
2. Brief Description: Statement of Assistant Secretary of the Interior Harry R. Anderson before House Interior subcommittee, April 1, 1968. Briefing session on conditions relating to the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.
3. Relation to President's interests and programs: In support of Administration program to advance economic, political and social development in the Trust Territory.
4. Filed in:
5. Key dates:
6. Volume:
7. For further information contact Mr. George Milner, Interior Dept. 183-4736  
(Name, location, and telephone number)

STATEMENT  
OF

HARRY R. ANDERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FOR PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT, AT HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, APRIL 1, 1968 IN CONNECTION WITH COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF CONDITIONS IN THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS.

NOT FOR RELEASE

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee:

I must begin my remarks this morning by expressing the genuine gratitude of my Department to this Subcommittee for the concern it has evidenced regarding the Trust Territory.

We are grateful to the Subcommittee for visiting the Trust Territory earlier this year. All of us know, and I as a fellow traveler of sorts particularly know, that the trip was long and arduous. But it was very productive. Each member of the traveling group worked extraordinarily hard, for many days running, to learn all that he could about conditions in the Trust Territory. The Interior Department joins with the people of the Trust Territory in expressing appreciation for this reassuring and very useful undertaking. I was honored to be a part of it.

We are grateful to you, too, for the days you have already spent since that visit in considering in this Committee some of the results. As you know, I have been present during all of these sessions and have benefitted, both personally and officially, from hearing all that has been said -- both by members of the Committee and by exchanges with representatives

from the Departments of Defense and State.

My immediate purpose this morning is not to respond in detail to all the questions raised and the problems presented, but it is instead to indicate, first, where we are in general; second, by way of a few examples, what we are trying to do about some of the problems raised; and three, more particularly our current stance on the two major items that we hope this Committee will turn to very soon, namely funding and political status.

First, let me speak briefly to the issue of where we are in the Trust Territory today, in terms of our basic responsibility to encourage the development of the area. None of us will deny that, during the last 20 years, the United States Government in general and the Department of the Interior in particular could, and doubtless should, have done more to improve conditions in the Trust Territory. None of us will deny that the unmet needs are enormous. We have too few, and in too many cases poor, schools. The education system needs to focus more sharply upon vocational training. Our medical supplies and medical facilities are in short supply, to some extent because of bureaucratic ineptitude. Transportation facilities are inefficient, too expensive, and too few. I could go on, but I hope I need not and that you already understand my point: we have left undone many things that we ought to have done, and we know it. We are trying very hard to meet our responsibilities.

At the same time, perhaps you will permit me to tell you something of the other side of the story. While in a comparative sense, our Trust Territory performance does not look good, when it is compared with what we have achieved in the territories of the United States and with what we accept as minimally acceptable in the States, I suggest that it is sometimes well to set aside comparisons and examine the absolutes of our progress. A few examples here will suffice. Until 1963, the elementary school children of the Trust Territory who attended school at all sat in left over shacks, or grass huts, or under the trees to do so. Today we estimate the 96% of the elementary school children are in fact in school. They sit in some 679 classrooms, about two-thirds of which we regard as suitable. As late as 1962, we had only 150 public high school students, all attending one school, in the entire Trust Territory. Today there are over 4000 high school students, attending school in all of the districts. During the 1950's, there was one school teacher, trained to meet generally acceptable Stateside standards, in all of the Trust Territory. Today there are approximately 200 qualified American school teachers in the Trust Territory, in both elementary and secondary schools. This figure does not include Peace Corps Volunteers who also teach in the schools. As of 1960, we had a hospital in each of the six districts which, in terms of both size and quality, cried out for

replacement. Three have now been replaced. The other three are scheduled for replacement as soon as possible. Again, during most of the years of our Trust Territory administration, we had only one M.D. in the Territory, and no registered nurses. Today there are about a dozen M.D.'s and upwards of two dozen registered nurses.

I do not mean to indulge in self-congratulations. But I do mean to say that there has been forward motion, and significant forward motion.

I would like to turn, now, to a very few of the specific points raised during the course of the two days this committee has already devoted to conditions in the Trust Territory. I do so in order to make clear to you, by way of examples, that the problems you have identified are ones which we are pursuing as effectively as we know how.

-- As to the return to Bikini of its former residents, now on Kili, we are in almost daily contact with the AEC, whose scientific investigations as to radiation levels should be complete in the next few weeks. Presuming upon a favorable answer from AEC, we have, in recent days, requested the Department of Defense to consider whether our national security position will now permit the return of these people to their home island.

-- As to the problems of the people of Ujelang, they are equally acute and the High Commissioner has undertaken to improve

services to the atoll and to up-grade living conditions. While he was in Washington last February, he met with the Department of the Air Force in an effort to open some employment opportunities on Eniwetok for young men of Ujelang. The problem is not solved but it is not being ignored.

-- As to the numerous problems surrounding Kwajalein and Ebeye, we are exploring with Defense anew the actions we might jointly take to alleviate the very sorry conditions that exist in that part of the Marshalls.

-- As to the dual wage problem, pointed up by the compensation paid the single Micronesian who occupies the position of District Administrator, we have commenced to assemble all of the facts that I will need in order to deal wisely with this inequity. I have already told this Committee, and particularly Mr. Burton, that I have authority to take action on this point. But the matter is complex, not in terms of Mr. Heine or an individual in a particular job, but in terms of the ability of the area to compete with the remainder of the Pacific area. Our files show that we have been struggling with it since 1965, within days of Mr. Heine's appointment.

-- As to the request that we orient the education system far more toward meaningful, economically realistic, vocational education, we are trying to do precisely that. We have in hand

a recent full study by Stanford Research, which will help us. We have under construction vocational facilities at Palau, and more are planned. We are right now undertaking to recruit vocational education teachers.

-- As to Mr. Morton's interesting inquiry concerning the possibility of Japanese creditors inheriting the assets of MEICO, we have raised the necessary questions with the Trust Territory Government and we hope to have an answer soon.

In short, your comments and your questions have not gone unnoticed. We hope and expect to follow up fully and quickly upon them all.

I should like, now, to turn to the two issues which in my judgment are of the greatest immediate concern to this Committee and the Executive Branch -- funding and political status.

With respect to the funding, the Executive Branch has not yet completed all of the steps necessary to permit me this morning to tell you what we will recommend to you. You know, of course, that our current authorization, at the \$35 million a year level, expires at the end of the next fiscal year, on June 30, 1969. Very soon the budget process for the year ending June 30, 1970, will begin. For that purpose we will need a new authorization. The President's budget request for the Trust Territory for fiscal year 1969 totals \$34 million. In recent days, three Senators introduced a bill which would authorize \$40 million per year for

the fiscal years 1970 to 1973. While I cannot tell you definitively how we will report to the Senate on that bill, I can tell you that it is my current expectation that we will urge that the figure be raised. What we seek to find is that figure which will, on the one hand, meet the most urgent Trust Territory needs during the years in question, but which, on the other hand, will not be higher than the amount which the Trust Territory government can efficiently, economically, and wisely spend. When we have found that figure, and it must necessarily be very soon, we will immediately advise this Committee. It will be our great hope that new ceiling legislation will then be considered by this Committee.

Lastly, as to the matter of political status. Because this is so crucial a subject, I will want to deal with it at a later time in very great detail. At this moment, I want only to reaffirm the position which Secretary Udall brought to this Committee last July, a position which was embraced the following month in the President's communication to the Congress, and which was further supported by Defense and State representatives at your earlier meeting.

Secretary Udall then stated that the security interests of the United States, and the increasing restlessness of the Micronesians, compel the United States Government now to turn to and act upon the issue of the future political status of the Trust



Territory. I cannot overstate the urgency as to time. The late Dr. Taylor of the staff of this Committee used to say that "five years ago might have been too soon, and five years hence may be too late". We agree. We must achieve our objective of a lasting political association between the Trust Territory and the United States -- or as Mr. Sisco stated, the extension of U. S. sovereignty over the area.

The question, of course, is how to do it. Secretary Udall told you last July that the Executive Branch, after exhaustive inter-departmental discussions over many years, had concluded that we could answer that question only in cooperation with the Congress -- we want the Congress to join with us in exploring the extremely complex and infinitely delicate subquestions that arise.

-- Is the Trust Territory in fact so important to our defense posture? Defense and State have given an unqualified yes, and we agree.

-- To make the Trust Territory a part of the United States, must we have a plebiscite, and must that plebiscite offer an option of sovereign independence? We think so, and Assistant Secretary of State Sisco so testified before you.

-- Must the Trust Territory be treated as a single entity? At least at the outset, yes, because we may not otherwise be able to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement.

-- But what of the other options in a plebiscite? Must they be spelled out, or is "association with the United States" alone sufficient? We doubt it. What will that phrase mean, and what will we tell the Micronesians who ask us what it means? We and the Congress must join in answering that question.

These are the kinds of questions which need careful and extended consideration. For the executive branch to alone answer them without the fullest possible exchange with members of the Congress, would be unwise. It is the Congress which has plenary power under the Constitution to determine the fact of, and the form of, the Trust Territory's association with the United States. We thus cannot risk further action in the area of political status unless the Executive and Legislative Branches are as one in agreeing as to whether we should proceed, when, and how. When the right time comes, I will welcome an opportunity to speak further on this extremely urgent subject.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will welcome your questions.