

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

March 28, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN A. FROEBE, JR. *JAF*

SUBJECT: Proposed Appointment of a
Commissioner to Conduct the
Plebiscite in the Northern Marianas

At Tab I is a draft memorandum from you to the President which attaches a letter to him from his Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, Ambassador F. Haydn Williams. Williams recommends that the President establish a position of Plebiscite Commissioner to conduct a plebiscite in the Northern Marianas on the Covenant we signed recently giving commonwealth status to the islands. Ambassador Williams recommends that the President appoint Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the former editor of the Christian Science Monitor, to fill this position.

The Commissioner would supervise all aspects of the plebiscite, which is being planned for late June and which will ask the people of the Northern Mariana Islands to approve the Covenant we have recently signed with their representatives giving commonwealth status to the islands. The Commissioner will also supervise an education program for the people of the Northern Marianas to inform them fully of the nature and implications of the proposed commonwealth arrangement, and of the possible alternatives if they reject the Covenant in favor of remaining with the other five districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Thus, the Commissioner must be a person who will assure complete U. S. objectivity in the plebiscite, and free it as much as possible from allegations that the U. S. Government is imposing a commonwealth arrangement on the Northern Marianas.

The need for such a person has been foreseen throughout the course of the negotiations. The need has increased more recently as a result of emerging criticism of our Covenant from liberal Democrats

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in Congress, and from a small but vocal minority in the Northern Marianas who are supported by Micronesian leaders in the other five districts not yet reconciled to a separate status for the Northern Marianas.

I agree with Ambassador Williams that Mr. Canham would fill this need admirably. He was a Rhodes Scholar, and he served as Editor-in-Chief of the Christian Science Monitor from 1964 to 1974 following a distinguished career in journalism. He has also served on the U. S. delegation to the U. N. General Assembly, and is a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. (A biographic sketch is attached to Ambassador Williams' letter to the President.) He has indicated informally his availability for this task. In the event that his appointment is not feasible, alternative candidates would be Mr. Barry Bingham, publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal, or Dr. Nathan Pusey, former President of Harvard University. Their availability is not known.

If the plebiscite results in a favorable vote, we would then present the Covenant to the Congress. We have throughout the negotiations consulted closely with the leadership of the Interior Committees in both Houses, and now are broadening our consultations with other members of Congress.

The Departments of State, Defense, and Interior have concurred in the recommendation to establish this position and to appoint Mr. Canham to it.

Mr. William Walker, because of the need to get a Plebiscite Commissioner on the job by mid-April, has already raised the matter informally with the President. The President has approved an approach to Mr. Canham by Mr. Walker.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the draft memorandum to the President at Tab I.

*Tab I
forwarded
4/10 p.m.*

Concurrence:

Mr. Jankal *WJW/OK*

Mr. Walker *WJW/OK*

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NSC CORRESPONDENCE PROFILE

DOC		RECD			LOG NBR	INITIAL ACTION O
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SCOWCROFT _____ SCHLESINGER, J _____ EYES ONLY EXDIS

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SUBJECT: *Proposed Appt of a Commissioner to Conduct Re Plebiscite in The Northern Marianas / Micronesia*

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	ACTION	INFO		
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STAFF SECRETARY				MEMO FOR PRES ()
FAR EAST <i>Roche</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	REPLY FOR ()
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA				APPROPRIATE ACTION ()
MID EAST / NO. AFRICA / SO. ASIA				MEMO TO ()
EUROPE / CANADA				RECOMMENDATIONS ()
LATIN AMERICA				JOINT MEMO ()
UNITED NATIONS				REFER TO FOR ()
ECONOMIC				ANY ACTION NECESSARY? ()
SCIENTIFIC				CONCURRENCE ()
PROGRAM ANALYSIS				DUE DATE:
NSC PLANNING				COMMENTS: (INCLUDING SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS)
CONGRESSIONAL <i>Saper</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
OCEANS POLICY				
INTELLIGENCE				

SUBSEQUENT ROUTING/ACTIONS

DATE	FROM	TO	S	SUBSEQUENT ACTION REQUIRED (OR TAKEN):	CY TO
3/28		HAK	X	Pres for decision (4/4)	
4/10		Pres	P	Decision	
4/11			C	Superseded by Walker / Rumsfeld memo	

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