

MEMORANDUM

1922

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL GDS

ACTION

April 10, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*  
SUBJECT: Proposed Appointment of a  
Commissioner to Conduct the  
Plebiscite in the Northern Marianas

At Tab A is a letter to you from your Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, Ambassador F. Haydn Williams, which recommends that you 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 you appoint Mr. Erwin D. Canham, the former editor of the Christian Science Monitor, to fill this position.

As you will recall, you recently gave public support to the Covenant and expressed your hope for a favorable outcome in the plebiscite when you received two Northern Marianas political leaders on March 19.

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.

CONFIDENTIAL GDS

*1/18 4/20/90*

CONFIDENTIAL

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 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.

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 you.) 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.

I understand that Mr. Walker has already raised this matter informally with you, and that you have approved an approach by him to Mr. Canham.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve establishment of the position of Plebiscite Commissioner for the Northern Marianas.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

That you appoint Mr. Erwin D. Canham to the position of Plebiscite Commissioner for the Northern Marianas.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

CONFIDENTIAL

Photocopy from Gerald R. Ford Library

BROUGHT FORWARD

EXECUTIVE

FG 1-2 4-11-75  
Previously filed Date

Name Carham, Erwin D.

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

same 6-19-75  
New File Symbol Date

Final Action ltr to President

from above