REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN A. CARVER, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONIES FOR GOVERNOR RALPH PAIEWONSKY IN ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS, APRIL 5, 1961, 11:30 E.S.T.

Governor Paiewonsky, distinguished members of Congress, Governor Merwin, Governor de Castro, distinguished visitors, fellow citizens:

I am pleased and proud to participate in this inspiring ceremony of inauguration of a Governor. As Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Public Land Management, I have the responsibility for far-flung and diverse activities of the Department, including Land Management, the National Parks, and Indian Affairs. But I have often said that when the stewardship of the administration of the Department in this era is appraised by history, what has happened in the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands will loom far larger in importance than how we have managed our lands or how we have built our parks.

You have today inaugurated one of your own—a native of these Islands who has lived and worked here all his life. The legislature in which he once served has provided arrangements for this wonderful occasion which reflect cherished insular traditions. For example, both the unity and the separateness of the three Islands is symbolized as the Committee and the Governor honor each with its own ceremony today, tomorrow and the day after.

Your guests, and I am one, are grateful to be included. We are mindful that our presence here has its own symbolism. As a representative of the Executive Branch and the Administration of President Kennedy, my being here reminds you that though he is a Virgin Islander, Governor Paiewonsky's appointment was made by the President in Washington.

The presence of distinguished Senators evidences that his appointment required and received confirmation in that Chamber. Members of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committees of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, have joined you today because the Congress has legislative responsibility in the Virgin Islands which is different and more extensive than that which it exercises in the 50 States.

We cannot help considering, then, the nature and character of the relationship which the Executive and the Legislative Branches of the United States Government, the Federal Establishment, bears toward this, one of the "territories" of the United States. You deserve to know what attitude and spirit the new Administration in Washington will bring to its part of the task of exercising the authority and fulfilling the responsibilities it has toward "territories" in general, and the Virgin Islands in particular.
First let it be stated that the term "territory" carries no special constitutional meaning. What is meant by the term is what the Congress may from time to time say; this will vary even among those areas operating under their own organic acts--Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

I know of no generic term to describe the process whereby the political development of people in areas described as "territories" can be precisely described. History helps us gain insight into the process but it furnishes us no standard progression.

An examination into history will reveal that the United States in its attitude toward noncontiguous territories has a good record, nonetheless. We have never been a colonial power in the sense of building an ageless empire. Our record, moreover, is one of performance and not of propaganda. All peoples have been free to work out that political relationship to or with the United States which is best suited to their own conditions and status in the world community.

We have not been static or doctrinaire in this respect. In the century since the rise of the United States to its world power position, full democratic rights have been extended in a variety of ways. Cuba and the Philippines represent the extreme of total sovereign independence--Alaska and Hawaii the opposite pole of complete integration into the Federal union of equal States.

Between these extremes in the form of ultimate self-government, our system has been flexible enough to accommodate the varying needs of widely different cultures, economies and heritages. Furthermore, our system takes account of the dynamics in social and political development because one form may freely evolve into another, more advanced institutional arrangement. The concept of commonwealth status, for example, has no constitutional basis but was created to meet the needs of the Philippines and Puerto Rico as those areas reached higher stages in their development and capability for independent administration. If need be, we can fall back on our political ingenuity to find other solutions for new or different conditions when they arise.

This record of American attitude and concern towards those who are dependent upon it holds a lesson for the future of the Virgin Islands. Progress toward ultimate self-government need not be dependent upon or measured by the form of political institutions at any particular time. Rather, progress toward self-government will be found in the attitudes which exist in the hearts and minds of the people concerned and the manner in which that attitude is reflected in the exploitation of resources for the general good.

The Federal Government recognizes its responsibilities to the people of the Virgin Islands. These responsibilities basically are not different from those owed to all citizens of the United States; the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Constitution makes no exception for geographical insularity. But, as in the case of all citizens, the peculiar problems of an area must be met by treatments which may be equally peculiar to the locale. Therefore, we must look to the local people and their leaders to identify their problems and to make known their hopes and aspirations. To the extent that these cannot be achieved by purely local effort
and to the extent that they are properly matters for Federal participation, then we recognize the obligation to assume a portion of the partnership burden—just as we do in West Virginia, or Illinois, or in Idaho.

But, beyond this general welfare framework, the relationship between the Virgin Islands and the Federal establishment contains special and unusual incidents. These must be met by steps which are adequate to the time and place. They involve simply the creation of a social, economic and political environment which will permit the residents of the area to make a free choice as to their ultimate form of relationship with the United States. Such a choice cannot be free so long as it would be overshadowed by any kind of fear—fear of outside aggression or subversion, fear of economic instability, fear of shortages in basic physical necessities.

Our partnership must address itself to the preparation for this free choice. We must catalog the needs of the community and agree upon our respective roles in meeting them. How long the choice is delayed will depend entirely upon our success in establishing the goals and achieving independence in fact as a precedent to self-government in law.

In conclusion, let it be said that it is not the intention of the Department of the Interior to impose "administration". Governor Paiewonsky is an appointee of the President of the United States, confirmed by the United States Senate. He is not a subordinate in the Department of the Interior. Your legislature was elected by free people. The Organic Act conveys governmental powers to the Governor and the Legislature, and under the framework of that Act they owe special accountability to laws, not to men who may administer bureaus or departments in Washington.

The duties and responsibilities which the laws confer upon the Department of the Interior I pledge you will be exercised in a climate of understanding of, and responsiveness to, the special situation of your Islands—your insularity, your heritage of architecture and custom, the limitations of your agricultural potential, your lack of water.

We will give our time and thoughtful attention to the activities of the Virgin Islands Corporation. We will speak up for you as your affairs are reviewed in Congress.

Ours is a partnership in the task of creating an improved (and ever-improving) social, economic and political environment. Though this Governor was appointed, I hope the next will be elected. It is my hope that soon you will have a voice, if not a vote, in Congress.

Our rights, duties and obligations as citizens are protected by the Constitution which Governor Paiewonsky today has taken an oath to support and defend against all enemies.

Let us all, as Americans, join with him in the oath to bear true faith and allegiance to the same, so help us God.

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