

Statement of John A. Carver, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Public Land Management, before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, February 5, 1963. (Briefing sessions on Public Land Management Bureaus - Office of Territories.)

Office of Territories

In many ways the "exterior" responsibilities of the Department of the Interior are the most challenging and the most interesting. Although the "bureau" was reduced to an "office" after Alaska and Hawaii were admitted to the Union, and the volume of work is reduced, there has been no reduction in the variety and the diversity of governmental problems presented.

As to Guam and the Virgin Islands, each as American culturally as Dubuque, the Department has placed great reliance upon the governmental structure provided in the Organic acts. Governors of these two territories are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate and the people of these territories elect legislatures with a wide scope of legislative responsibilities.

The High Commissioner of the Trust Islands of the Pacific is likewise appointed by the President although his appointment does not require Senate confirmation. This vast ocean area is important to the United States. The close working relationships which exist between the Departments of Defense, State and Interior, the interest of the President expressed through the creation of a Trust Territory Task Force under my chairmanship, and the special responsibilities of the High Commissioner to report his program to the United Nations on all matters are known to this committee.

The Governor of American Samoa is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior and the performance of a career veteran of the Interior Department, H. Rex Lee, in this assignment has been outstanding. He has executed a sharply stepped-up program of education, health and physical rebuilding of a kind which we hope to have under way very soon in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. All of these men are present today and can and should outline their programs directly.

The Virgin Islands Corporation will be dealt with in a separate section.

the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, both of which report to me. We are closer than we've ever been before in getting the issues identified, and for the first time in many years we have these two groups of Interior technicians working together with a mutual resolve to come up with recommendations to the Congress which seem equitable and workable.

b. Heirship

The Secretary also mentioned heirship. This enormously difficult question may be solvable in this Congress; it is my own judgment that if it is, it will be only after some basic choices are made. One approach is purchase, with government grant or government credit, of the fractionated interests which are our legacy from the early allotment acts. The budget commitment would be very great.

Another approach, which has run into certain legal (or legalistic, depending on your point of view) objections, in effect says that the U. S. government, holding the legal title when the beneficial ownership is too fractionated to permit economic utilization of the land, can and should take over the management for that reason alone, converting in the process the fractional owners' interest in realty to an interest in personalty. Compensation for this interest could be guaranteed by the government, but it would be contemplated that it would be paid out of the fruits of the land restored to use, thus obviating any great budget burden.

I no longer pretend to have the right answer.

For further discussion of these, and similar tough questions, I turn to the man the President designated, with Senate concurrence, to be responsible for this subject matter, Commissioner Philleo Nash.