

REMARKS OF UNDER SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR., BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, JANUARY 27, 1965

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

In yesterday's session, Secretary Udall indicated that until a successor has been named in the Assistant Secretary position I have vacated, I will be wearing two hats. If that is so, the one I am wearing today is a pleasant one.

I am not here because Director Van Cleve or the Governors or the High Commissioner need any particular Secretarial support. The Director is an old hand in work with this committee, and was an experienced and trusted witness long before I joined the Department. Her promotion to the directorship of Territories was an earned one, and very popular.

As to the Governors, they operate with a good deal of autonomy. This is particularly true in Guam and the Virgin Islands, where Congress has given American citizenship under organic acts which also grant legislative and executive and judicial powers. It is fitting that they should report to the Congress directly today.

One part of territorial responsibility not evidenced by a place on the witness list is the Virgin Islands corporation. I am sure you will be interested in it, particularly since the President's budget indicates

a sharp curtailment of its operations. In this connection, I recall with satisfaction a dinner with members of the Committee four years ago, when the Department told the Chairman that it was determined to carry out the statutory duty to wind up the affairs of VICORP within or in advance of the statutory period.

Recently I was in the Virgin Islands, to address the Constitutional convention. Governor Paiewonsky will tell you more about it, but I would like to read a few paragraphs of my statement to that body.

"In one respect you are not completely free agents. Unlike the states whose sovereign existence and powers are preserved by constitutional format, the territories are peculiarly creatures of Federal discretion. In a large sense you are directly participants in the exercise of a Federal prerogative. We are both participants in a most interesting experiment--the development of self-government by direct Congressional action.

"This is the real essence of the process you are initiating here this evening. You are proposing to consider the basic elements in the delicate relationship that exists between your political community and its creator, the Congress of the United States.

"Traditionally, changes in the organic powers and governmental structure of the territories have emanated from the source of that power--the Federal legislative and executive institutions. But I think it particularly fitting and proper that the moving force for change originate with those most directly affected, the citizens of the territories. Through this device the Congress can be assured that the proposed changes represent the true desires of the territory. It will be a signal to the outside world that the principle of self-government is a working force in a truly democratic system."

* * * * *

"As in all facets of public affairs, the assumption of authority to express political aspirations carries with it a grave obligation to protect the broader national interest. As full citizens of the United States, you must assure that the recommendations coming from this convention conform to the document which establishes the ultimate Federal sovereignty, the United States Constitution. More than that, in exercising the democratic prerogative of petition you must be ever mindful of the image of America as it is seen in other quarters of the world. Every element of my experience with the Virgin Islands generates confidence that you will be responsive to these basic obligations."

I have read these words, because it is important that the relationship be understood. And it gives me the opportunity here to tell you that our interest in elective governorship for the organized territories is unabated, but we have not sent yet a bill, because we think it appropriate that these American citizens be heard from in this constitutional process of petition to the Congress.

The Secretary spoke eloquently yesterday about the territories, and I need not repeat the tributes he paid our off-shore administrators. Rather I prefer here to say how much we appreciate the mutual responsibility which this Committee and our Department share in the external affairs of the United States. We think the United States is well served with administrators like our Governors and High Commissioner--not simply as administrators of a government program authorized by Congress, but as stewards of the American concept of freedom in offshore areas.

In this we are pleased to cooperate closely with our sister Department, State, and, as to Trust Territory matters, with our representative to the Trusteeship Council. We feel fortunate that a veteran of these affairs sits on this Committee, and that another one, Congressman Yates, is back in Congress.

We listened well yesterday as Congressman Carey reminded us of the importance of education, and of including the territories in the administrations' program for education.

This subcommittee is unique. There are many new members of the committee, but new members like Congressman Bingham and Congressman Foley who have been intimately connected with territorial matters hardly can be classed as needing education from our Department.

We look forward to continued cooperation, and I know you will find the staff of Territories always responsive. I introduce now Mrs. Van Cleve.