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FOR THE RECORD

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEETING WITH VIRGIN ISLAND DELEGATION

Friday, July 23, 1976
1:00 PM (45 minutes)
First Floor Dining Room

From: Jim Field *J.F.*

I. PURPOSE

To meet informally with the Virgin Island delegates and alternates.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS AND PRESS PLAN

- A. Background: At the request of Rog Morton and Jim Baker, an invitation was extended to former Governor Evans inviting the delegation to lunch with you.
- B. Participants: See attached list, which includes background information.
- C. Press Plan: White House Photo Only.

Staff

Dick Cheney
Jim Cavanaugh

President Ford Committee Staff

Rog Morton
Jim Baker



VIRGIN ISLANDS

Delegates

Hon. Melvin Evans (Governor)
Christiansted, St. Croix

Dear Melvin

- 1) Ford
- 2) Former Governor
- 3) Head of delegation to Kansas City
- 4) Profession: Doctor of Medicine and recently returned from Johns Hopkins refresher courses
- 5) Member of the Rules Committee

Raymond Smith
St. Thomas

Dear Ray

- 1) Ford
- 2) State Chairman
- 3) State Senator from St. Thomas
- 4) Member of the Credentials Committee

Mr. Philip Clark
Cristiansted, St. Croix

Dear Phil

- 1) Ford
- 2) Senator and Vice President of Legislature in 1971-72
- 3) First Vice-Chairman of the Republican Territorial Committee and Treasurer
- 4) Vice-President and Trust Officer, Virgin Islands Title and Trust Co.
- 5) President and General Manager, Young-Clark Insurance, Ltd.
- 6) Member of the Platform Committee
- 7) Wife - Meredith Clark - is National Committeewoman

Luther Benjamin
Christiansted, St. Croix

Dear Luther

- 1) Ford
- 2) Vice-President, Republican Party
- 3) Member, Territorial Committee
- 4) President - National Black Republican Council
- 5) President - Luther Benjamin & Associates (General Contractors)
- 6) Member of the Committee on Permanent Organizations



VIRGIN ISLANDS

Alternates

Mr. Clemente Centron
St. Croix

Dear Clemente

- 1) Ford alternate
- 2) Self-employed - Construction and Heavy
- 3) Candidate for State Senate
- 4) Interested in Platform

Mrs. Viola Burgess
Christiansted, St. Croix

Dear Joan

- 1) Ford alternate
- 2) Loan officer
- 3) Member of the Territorial Committee
- 4) Interested in Platform

Mr. Athniel Ottley
St. Thomas

Dear Athniel

- 1) Ford alternate
- 2) Former State Senator and Lt. Governor
- 3) Interested in the Platform Committee
- 4) Occupation - Public Relations Officer for Government

Mrs. Francis Burgess
St. Thomas

Dear Fran

- 1) Ford alternate
- 2) Occupation - Media Public Relations
- 3) Serves on Territorial Committee
- 4) Secretary of the Republican Club of St. Thomas

Henry Rohlsen
St. Croix

Dear Henry

- 1) Ford
- 2) National Committeeman
- 3) Not a delegate or alternate but wanted to attend lunch



July 20, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

JIM FIELD

FROM:

PAUL MANAFORT *PM*

RE:

VIRGIN ISLANDS LUNCH ON JULY 23

The complete delegation - four delegates and four alternates has politically endorsed the President.

Governor Evans is their leader and Ray Smith, the State Chairman, enjoys speaking for the President in the Virgin Islands.

Luther Benjamin is the softest Ford delegate and enjoys talking with the press.

Philip Clark has written to Rogers Morton and requested that Gov. Evans give one of the nominating speeches for the President.

The points that the President should stress are: he is the only one who can win in November; we are confident of a 1st ballot victory in Kansas City; thanks for support.

This is a friendly delegation that wants to feel a part of the action.



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

C. F.

THE WHITE HOUSE

INFORMATION

WASHINGTON

July 23, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JIM CAVANAUGH

SUBJECT: Additional Information on Your Luncheon Meeting with the Virgin Islands Delegation

During the Puerto Rico trip I went over to St. Croix and had an informal luncheon with the Virgin Islands delegation, hosted by former Governor Melvin Evans and his wife at their home.

General Impressions

This is a delegation that is warm and friendly toward you personally and your positions. They expressed the concern a few months ago that they did not want their support for you at the convention to be taken for granted. As you know, the Virgin Islands has delegations to both political conventions, but the residents do not vote in Presidential elections.

There is a great feeling among the delegation against the current Governor of the Virgin Islands, Cecil King.

The only point I would add to the briefing notes provided by Jim Field on the individual delegates is that Luther Benjamin, the heavy-set black from St. Thomas, is quite emotional on the issue of making safety improvements with the St. Thomas Airport. He told me that a few years ago a plane taking off from St. Thomas Airport lost power and crashed into his home, killing his entire family. He was away at the time. He is strong for making improvements there. The other delegates respect his personal concern but want to have the St. Croix Airport serve as the main airport in the Virgin Islands.

The Virgin Islands delegation is viewed by people in the Virgin Islands as being very influential because of their pending role at the convention. Although there was no press present and I was the only one taking notes



at the luncheon, I found that most of what had been said by all parties involved appeared in the Virgin Islands newspapers in the days after my departure.

Specific Concerns and Issues

Here is an outline of the specific concerns and issues that were raised with me:

1. Personnel Appointments. They feel they would like some consultation on federal appointments made in the Virgin Islands but recognize that most of them are career appointments. There is some resentment over people being placed in federal positions from localities other than the Virgin Islands. Mrs. Clark, wife of a delegate and the National Committeewoman from the Virgin Islands, felt that some progress was being made on this.
 2. Aliens. There are 40,000 to 50,000 aliens in the Virgin Islands from neighboring islands, which is causing an increasing unemployment problem.
 3. Work Permits. There are paper work problems related to Immigration activities when it comes to reissuing work permits for aliens. The result is that an employer must spend a day and in some cases two full days waiting for his number to be called so that he can re-certify an alien who is working for him. You could say that you have been informed about the problem and have asked the Attorney General to provide you with a report on what steps can be taken to simplify the work permit processing in the Virgin Islands.
 4. Dr. Evans. All of the delegates expressed an interest in having Dr. Evans be a seconder of your nomination at the convention. They indicated they have been in contact with Odie Fish about this.
 5. Farmers Home Administration. There was some concern about delays in processing of Farmers Home Administration loan applications. You could say that you have been informed of this problem and have asked Earl Butz for a report.
- The Agricultural Appropriation Bill which you approved last week mandated that an additional 850 positions be allocated by Agriculture to the FHA to speed up processing of applications.
6. St. Kitts. There was great concern expressed about an allegation that U.S. military aircraft were going



to be used to transport a military band from the island of St. Kitts to the Virgin Islands for the July 4 Bicentennial observance. There is a very negative feeling among Republicans there concerning St. Kitts and the current premier, Robert L. Bradshaw. Upon returning I checked and found that in fact there was no military aircraft being used nor were any Bicentennial funds being used to transport the St. Kitts band to the Virgin Islands. We so notified the delegation.

Concern was also expressed about a U.S. citizen, Melvin Lee, who had been imprisoned by the St. Kitts premier on "trumped-up charges." You received a telegram about this from a group of Virgin Islands citizens, and I replied on your behalf indicating that Lee had been released from the St. Kitts prison and had left the island.

