

Copy

(A.8706/16/45)

Immediate.

Foreign Office, S. W. 1.

18th November, 1938.

7025/v
33

Dear Bevir,

Please see the Colonial Office letter 86059/38 Pt.III of the 8th November. As I have already informed you on the telephone, we are in entire agreement with the view that an early interdepartmental meeting should be held to discuss the policy which His Majesty's Government should adopt towards the efforts of the United States Government to assert claims to Pacific Islands hitherto regarded as British which they wish to acquire in order to develop a trans-Pacific air service. Recent developments have made it plain that we are exposed to the risk of the United States Government developing such claims in a no very distant future, and it is decidedly regrettable that they have as yet shown little or no disposition to reply to the practical solution of the whole problem which we originally submitted to them on the 30th March last in the form of an invitation to participate in a conference with His Majesty's Governments in the United Kingdom, Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand to examine the political and technical aspects of co-operative and reciprocal air services by a British Commonwealth and United States Company across the Pacific.

Provided it suits your convenience and that of the other Government Departments concerned, I am now writing to let you know that Butler, our Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, will be willing to preside at an interdepartmental meeting on Thursday of next week. the

24th November

A. Bevir, Esq.

24th November, and suggests that the meeting should be held in his room at 4.45 p.m. on that afternoon. Subject to any additional suggestions, we would propose that the agenda for this meeting should comprise the following points:-

(1) Whether His Majesty's Government can in any way supplement the efforts they have already made to secure acceptance of their invitation to a four-party conference;

(2) Whether it would be advisable to take the initiative in reverting to the United States proposal for a clean-up of conflicting claims to Pacific Islands. If so, in what form should the approach to Washington be made?

(3) If it is decided to leave the initiative under (2) to the United States Government, to what extent should the problem when it arises be dealt with along the lines suggested in Foreign Office memorandum enclosed in our letter to the Colonial Office A.7569/16/45 of the 28th October?

(4) What supplementary action, if any, should be taken in order to strengthen our position on individual islands, e.g. Christmas Island?

(5) What reply should we return to any request from the United States Government to be provided with more specific information than we have already placed at their disposal regarding the survey of certain Pacific Islands which is now being undertaken by an expedition from New Zealand?

In addition to the foregoing items, it would seem appropriate that the meeting should also consider what advice should be tendered to the New Zealand Government in reply to the suggestion which they addressed to His Majesty's Government in general terms for a conference

between