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(A. 470/21/45)

With Compliments of
American Republics

AB. Acheson Esq
Colonial Office

20 July 1939

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FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

19th January, 1939.

(A 470/21/45)

Dear Dixon,

In accordance with the wish expressed by Sir Harry Batterbee at the interdepartmental meeting held on the 12th January I enclose a brief which we have drawn up for his use at the forthcoming conference with representatives of Australia and New Zealand, setting out the main political considerations relating to the Pacific Islands. This brief should be read in conjunction with the note prepared by the Air Ministry for the use of Sir Harry Batterbee which, I gather, is to be submitted on the 18th January to the International Air Communication Committee. It is drawn up in a form which will admit of its being placed at the disposal of the Dominion representatives at the conference subject, of course, to the omission of the marginal references to documents already forwarded for the use of Sir Harry Batterbee in my letter to you A.9464/G of the 21st December.

You will note that the second page of the enclosed
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brief states that the view of His Majesty's Government is that the British title to Hull Island is sufficiently strong to enable them, if the necessity arises, to threaten to refer the disputed claim to this island to arbitration. This statement, which conforms to the wish expressed by Sir Harry Batterbee at the interdepartmental meeting, has been approved by Fitzmaurice, one of our legal advisers, whose opinion on the subject is set forth in the enclosed minute. As regards the first paragraph of his minute, we have telegraphed to Washington telling them that we should appreciate an urgent reply to a request which we previously addressed to them for any available material showing the basis of the United States claim to Hull Island. We think it improbable, however, that they will be able to secure such material, especially as we have been at pains to emphasise that discretion should be exercised in obtaining it. Although I understand that the Colonial Office are preparing a note on Hull Island for inclusion in the papers placed at Sir Harry's disposal, he may be interested to see the enclosed note

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on the subject which we have drawn up from the information available in our files. I have verbally drawn the attention of Acheson, of the Colonial Office, to the last sentence of this note.

Lastly, Sir Harry may be interested to hear that we have written semi-officially to our Embassy at Washington telling them that, in the light of the Air Attaché's minute drawing attention to the negative attitude of the United States Navy Department in relation to landing facilities at Honolulu, we consider that it is all the more necessary to consolidate our position on Hull Island and to refuse any suggestion of sharing it with the United States Government in the event of their confronting us with such a request.

I am forwarding copies of this letter to Acheson of the Colonial Office, Jarrett of the Admiralty, Herbertson of the Air Ministry and Jones of the Treasury.

Yours sincerely

(Sd.) J. BALFOUR

P.S. Since writing this letter I have seen Washington telegram/