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CABINET

FUTURE OF JAMAICA

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES

The Jamaica Referendum has resulted in the decision that the territory should withdraw from The West Indies Federation. There can be no question of Her Majesty's Government not accepting this decision; indeed we agreed over a year ago that Jamaica would be free to secede if it so wished. There will, naturally, be important implications for the other islands in the Federation and I shall be discussing the general issues with the Federal Prime Minister and his colleagues this week.

2. Subject to this, it remains to be decided what the future of Jamaica should be. Mr. Manley, the Premier, is coming to London to see me on 2nd October and he will, I know, ask for full independence within the Commonwealth. In view of Jamaica's size (4,400 square miles), population (1.6 millions), economic viability and fair political stability, we cannot really contemplate resisting such a request, given the precedents of Cyprus and Sierra Leone. I propose, therefore, subject to the agreement of my colleagues, to agree that Jamaica should have full independence and that Her Majesty's Government will sponsor its admittance to Commonwealth membership when the time comes.

3. The Jamaica Premier appreciates that the legislative and administrative problems created by his territory's withdrawal from the Federation will take some time to resolve, and that until these have been studied in some detail it would be impracticable to set a firm date for independence. Further, Mr. Manley has said publicly that there is to be a General Election before Independence Day, and, while unlikely, it cannot be ruled out that there may be a change of government. Such an event would lead to further delay. In these circumstances I propose if possible to avoid agreeing to a firm date for Jamaican independence at this stage; I shall, however, undertake that Her Majesty's Government will do everything possible to achieve that end as speedily as is practicable.

4. As mentioned above I am having discussions with the Federal Prime Minister at the moment and I will report on the position regarding the remainder of The West Indies Federation as soon as the picture is clearer. The key to an Eastern Caribbean Federation is held by Dr. Williams, Premier of Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad is the richest of the West Indian territories and the only one capable of maintaining an independent Federation now that Jamaica has withdrawn. Dr. Williams' present attitude towards Federation without Jamaica is unknown and he has so far refrained from comment. I have sent him a message asking for his views but, meanwhile, it is quite likely that Trinidad will ask for independence on its own. In that event we should have no option other than to agree.

I. M.

*Colonial Office, S.W. 1,
25th September, 1961.*

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