

since the second World War. There is no problem with the major oil companies but there are several independent companies on this Committee and at the present time it was felt best not to invite the independents to take part since they might leak the news to the public. Mr. Hoover informed the Ambassador that on the U.S. side the whole matter of petroleum planning is in train.

On the general question of planning the Acting Secretary said that a great deal would depend on whether the oil pipelines would be closed concurrently with the closing of the Canal. In other words, the alternatives to be considered are extreme denial (in the event the pipelines are also closed) or merely taking up the slack (in the event that only the Canal is closed) by rerouting tankers.

In connection with the payment of Canal tolls the Acting Secretary emphasized the importance of refraining from any action which could provoke the closure of the Canal and which could be blamed upon the Western powers. In other words, if the Canal is to be closed it should be closed by unilateral Egyptian action and not as a result of actions by the West. Only in this way could we expect to have public opinion behind us. Sir Roger said that on the question of tolls he was still waiting for final views from London. The Acting Secretary informed the Ambassador that Secretary Dulles had recommended from London that United States Government ships transiting the Canal protest any payment of tolls to the Egyptian Government and only make payment under coercion, entering this fact in the ship's log. Instructions to this effect had been sent to Government ships but no advice as yet has been given to merchant vessel owners.

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## 56. Editorial Note

During the evening of August 3, the Department of State delivered to the British Embassy the Department's response to the Embassy's note of July 28 on petroleum planning. Regarding the British note, see Document 19. The text of the Department's response reads as follows:

"The Department of State agrees with the point made in the British Embassy's note of July 28, 1956 'Suez Canal: Oil Supplies' that the expert knowledge and practical assistance of U.S. and UK oil industry experts are indispensable to the preparation of effective plans of action to cope with the oil supply problem which closure of the Suez Canal would create. The Department sees no obstacle to