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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . . . .

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 19, 1975

MR PRESIDENT:

You asked Don Rumsfeld  
for the status on the National Study Commission  
on Records and Documents of Federal Officials.  
Doug Bennett prepared the attached response  
for you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMC', written in a cursive style.

Jim Connor

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 18, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CONNOR  
FROM: DOUG BENNETT **DPB**  
SUBJECT: National Study Commission on Records  
and Documents of Federal Officials

In response to your inquiry regarding the attached editorial, the President recently approved the appointment of Philip Buchen as the White House member on the subject Commission, and the nomination of three public members: Herbert Brownell, former Attorney General of the U.S.; Ernest May, a distinguished contemporary historian from Harvard; and Harry McPherson, former General Counsel to President Johnson who currently practices law in Washington. Phil Buchen contacted the three public members who all agreed to serve. However, Mr. McPherson has since decided that he cannot serve due to time constraints. We have therefore put into our staffing process a recommendation of Douglas Cater, a former Special Assistant to both President Johnson and the Secretary of the Army. However, objections were raised to Mr. Cater. We will now recommend Lucien Battle, a former Assistant Secretary of State who currently heads the Middle East Institute.

We delayed filling these positions for several months at the advice of the Justice Department. We have now overruled Justice and are proceeding with the appointments. Phil Buchen assures me that the editorial is inaccurate in that there is ample time to conduct the work of the Commission prior to the deadline.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Don R

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Status ??

# The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

## Wanted: Four Commissioners

**T**HE RECORDS OF a President, and indeed those of many federal officials, constitute an immensely valuable and irreplaceable national resource. Yet there is no clear policy on how such records should be maintained and made available for study. The controversy over President Nixon's papers and tapes illuminated the defects in the traditional view that such materials are the personal property of each chief executive. When the problem of safeguarding Mr. Nixon's archives arose last fall, Congress quickly stepped in to place those materials in protective custody at the National Archives (an act still under challenge in federal court). But Congress also recognized that the basic policy ought to be reassessed and created a national commission of officials and archival experts to recommend new rules for the control, preservation and use of the records of all federal officials in the future.

Almost seven months after that law was passed, the commission still does not exist. The Senate and House members have been named. The major historical associations have chosen distinguished representatives. Dele-

gates from various federal agencies are presumably available. But they cannot start work until President Ford makes his four nominations, one to represent the White House staff and three qualified persons from outside the government. Mr. Ford has not acted yet, despite his promise last December 19 to make his choices "as quickly as possible."

It should not take that long to designate a White House representative and to recruit three individuals out of the large community of able historians and archivists. The inexplicable delay has already been costly, since the panel, whenever it does come to life, will probably be unable to meet the March 31, 1976, deadline set by last winter's law. If Mr. Ford acts soon, however, the commission might still be able to complete its formidable job by July 4, 1976. There would be few more fitting ways to mark the bicentennial than by initiating new policies to insure that basic historical resources of the future will be more surely protected and preserved than in the past.