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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

August 15, 2018

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Recently, after being invited with my colleagues to participate in a forum on the African Growth and Opportunity Act, it came to my attention that there is a room in the State Department headquarters named for Loy Henderson, a former diplomat. Given Mr. Henderson's staunch opposition to the existence of the state of Israel, I write to register my dismay with this honor.

With nearly 40 years of service in America's diplomatic community, Loy Henderson served in a variety of positions including postings in Ireland, Iraq, and the former Soviet Union during World War II. He was the Assistant Chief of the European Affairs Division, and later, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Administration. Henderson was also the United States' ambassador to India and notably to Iran, where he participated in the CIA's catastrophic overthrow of the democratically-elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. But more concerning is his work as head of the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau in the Department.

It was from that post that Mr. Henderson was a bellicose enemy of the creation of Israel. After the end of the war, Mr. Henderson weighed in heavily against the United States recognition of Israel and worked assiduously to prevent the United States from supporting the new nation as it edged towards birth, calling U.S. recognition of the Jewish state a "tragic mistake."¹ One writer on Mr. Henderson, sympathetic to the former diplomat, conceded that Henderson was the "flagbearer of the anti-Zionist view" in the State Department.²

While the State Department has been an institution of overwhelmingly unalloyed good for our nation and the world, dedicated first to peace among nations, it has had blemishes on its history, even recent history. Looking back at it now, we can say fairly that the State Department in the pre- and post-war years was dominated by a professional diplomatic class, members of whom came from narrow subsets of geography and education. Tragically, many brought with them parochial worldviews often inhibited by pervasive racism and anti-Semitism.

¹ Michael R. Bechloss, *Presidential Courage: Braver Leaders and How They Changed America, 1789-1989* (Simon & Schuster: 2008), 232.

² Allen H. Podet, "Anti-Zionism in a Key United States Diplomat: Loy Henderson at the End of World War II," *American Jewish Archives*, November 1978, p. 179.

I do not write to accuse Mr. Henderson of rabid anti-Semitism. An authority no less than George Marshall urged President Truman not to recognize Israel. Nevertheless, members of the Truman White House at the time had their suspicions. Clark Clifford, one of President Truman's top advisers, felt that there were dark undertones to the positions of Mr. Henderson and his fellow Israel skeptics. The co-author of Clifford's memoirs, the late respected diplomat Richard Holbrooke, observed that "beneath the surface lay unspoken but real anti-Semitism on the part of some (but not all) policymakers" at State then.³ Harry Truman himself wrote in his memoirs that he believed that many leaders at the State Department had views of Israeli recognition shaped by latent anti-Semitism.⁴ Truman also would say that "conspirators" below Secretary Marshall sought to undermine his White House's Israel policy. About Henderson, Truman was even more abrupt: he "lied to me" about Israel's viability, Truman would say.⁵

Regardless of Mr. Henderson's own motivations, what we do know is that had his views been heeded, the U.S. would not have come to Israel's side and Israel's survival would have been in grave doubt. As a staunch supporter of Israel, I know you appreciate both the importance of Israel's history, and the symbolic value of its continued endurance.

This is certainly something President Truman recognized as demonstrated by his courageous recognition of Israel on May 14, 1948, just 11 minutes after its provisional government proclaimed its beginning. It is also why after being deterred from firing Mr. Henderson outright by Secretary Marshall, Truman banished him from the State Department headquarters to a post in India. Despite his long career of service to the United States, on one of the most critical decisions to confront him, Mr. Henderson supported what would have been calamitous policy and sought to smother the creation of the Jewish state in the cradle.

Given that history, it is striking to me that the headquarters for the State Department would be named for our great 33rd President, but that a room within it would be dedicated to a man who fought ferociously to deny Truman one of his – and the world's – most heroic achievements. I write you to register my disapproval with the name of the Henderson Auditorium and request that in your capacity you investigate the matter and consider a new moniker for the hall.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell Jr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Member of Congress

³ Richard Holbrooke, "Washington's Battle Over Israel's Birth," Washington Post, May 7, 2008; see also, Clark Clifford and Richard Holbrooke, Counsel to the President (Anchor Books: 1982).

⁴ Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope (Doubleday and Company: 1956), 162-164.

⁵ Bechloss, 232.