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FPC/HDR by 2 Date: 5/10/76

RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : American Embassy PORT LOUIS

DATE: May 2, 1972

SUBJECT : GOM Plan for Rehabilitation of Ilois

REF : Port Louis 0366

We enclose copies of the GOM Cabinet Committee Plan for resettlement of persons evacuated from Diego Garcia and other islands in the Chagos Archipelago. The Plan, which was obtained from the British High Commission (protect), has been submitted to HMG for financing.

A total of Rs. 8.56 million is requested for the scheme, with most of the money going for the construction of two housing estates for 460 families. 330 families are already in Mauritius, and 130 are eventually to be transferred from the Chagos. "Job Rehabilitation" for the heads of families is priced at less than Rs. 1 million and will mainly mean pig breeding. This idea is essentially the much-celebrated, never-implemented, pig breeding scheme of Foreign Minister Duval for increasing the income of poor Creole fishermen: Give them a certain number of piglets, subsidize the feed and you create prosperous pig farmers.

A relatively small sum of money has also been requested to reimburse the GOM for relief payments already made to the Ilois. Finally, compensation in cash is posed as an alternative to the housing and pig breeding scheme.

COMMENT: The Plan is a neat, sensible package, unless one takes into account the dismal GOM experience to date in undertaking projects in its National Development Plan. We have no way to gauge the speed of the proposal approval machinery of the British Government, but knowing the Mauritian pace, we would be surprised if many Ilois were tending pigs before the end of this year.

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Going beyond the issue of the disgraceful lassitude with which movement is being made to compensate the Ilois, there is the question will the present Plan work? We doubt it. First, the Plan is idealistic; no provision is made for anything going wrong. Second, only 78 of the 286 families interviewed selected pig breeding from among the three alternatives offered them. We suspect that only a small minority of Ilois know or care anything about rearing pigs. Third, entirely insufficient provision is made for technical assistance. Two members of the understaffed, ineffective GOM Extension Service are to supervise the project. We say flatly that the local Extension Service has a zero record of achievement and cannot hope to succeed with the Ilois. Essential to any hope of success for this project are a foreign supervisor who will assure that the funds are correctly and sensibly spent and specially-trained Mauritian personnel to support him.

Continuing our pessimism, we predict an unhappy scenario. The much dissatisfied Ilois will be installed in the two new housing estates, given pigs and after brief relative prosperity, for a variety of reasons, the project will fail. The then even more disgruntled, somewhat more self-confident, unemployed Ilois, concentrated in two areas, will become more than presently a target for political agitation.

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Enclosures:

The Plan (five copies)

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